XEROX

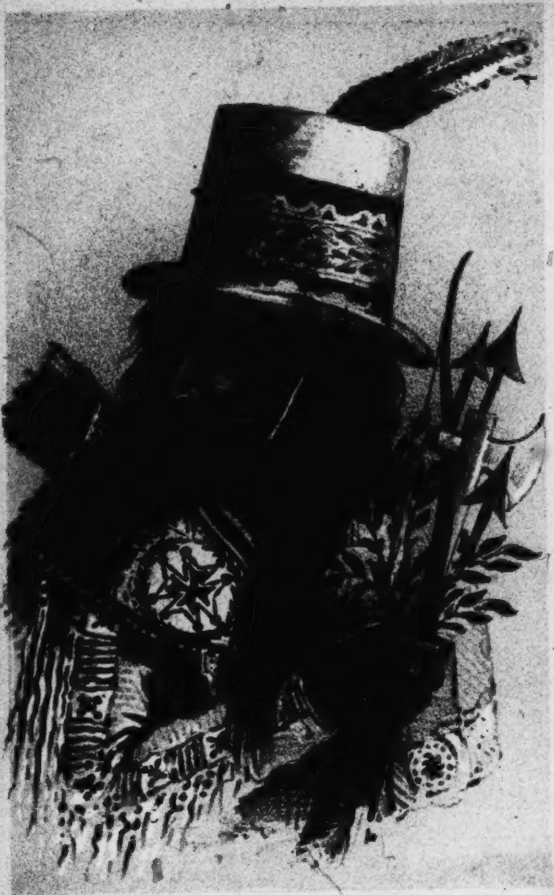
Xerox University Microfilms
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106

WESTERN AMERICANA

Reproduced from the original in the collection of
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARIES

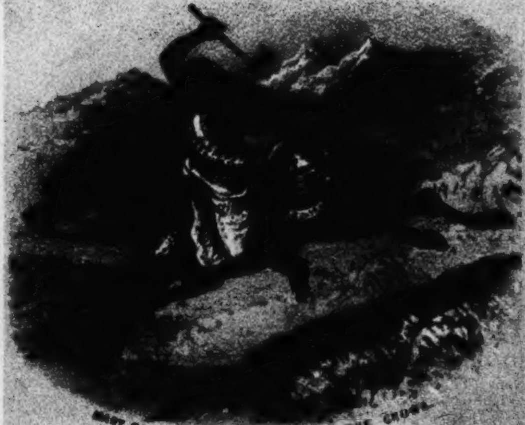
THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

OREGON MISSIONS.



THE LODGE POLE (Indian Name.)
Great Chief of the Flat-heads.
VICTOR (in Baptism.)   *Letter 24.*

OREGON MISSIONS
and Travels over the
ROCKY MOUNTAINS,
in 1845 46.



MARY QUILLE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE CROWS.

BY

FATHER P. J. DE SMET.

OF THE SOCIETY OF

JESUS.

NEW-YORK,
Published by Edward Dunigan.
1847.

OREGON MISSIONS

AND

Travels

OVER THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS,

IN 1845-46.

BY

FATHER P. J. DE SMET,

Of the Society of Jesus.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY EDWARD DUNIGAN,
151, FULTON-STREET.

M DCCC XLVII.

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1847, by

EDWARD DUNIGAN,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the
Southern District of New-York.

970.4
Sm3mE

Rattermann

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND DR. HUGHES,

BISHOP OF NEW YORK.

MONSEIGNEUR,

From the distant solitudes of the Rocky Mountains, in the midst of my missions among the Children of the Forests, I had the honor of addressing to you most of the letters contained in this Volume. I may, therefore, I feel, take the liberty of inscribing it to you, not only as a token of veneration for the distinguished qualities and eminent abilities which mark your character and add lustre to your dignity, but, likewise, as a tribute of personal friendship and esteem, with which I am allowed to subscribe myself,

Monseigneur,

Your humble servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

New-York, April 19th, 1847.

366591

PREFACE.

The contents of the present volume, from the pen of the celebrated Missionary of the Rocky Mountains, will be found, by the reader, to be fraught with extraordinary interest. The manners and customs of the North American Indians—their traditions, their superstitions, their docility in admitting the maxims of the gospel, and the edifying lives of thousands who have received the grace of baptism and instruction, are described with a freshness of coloring, and an exactness of detail, that will render them invaluable not only to our own times, but, especially, to posterity. He travels through those vast and unexplored deserts, not merely as a missionary, filled with the zeal which characterized the apostles of the primitive Society to which he belongs, but with the eye of a poet, and an imagination glowing with a bright yet calm enthusiasm. Hence the exquisite descriptions of scenery, of incidents, of events; descriptions which breathe the spirit of a mind imbued with the loftiest conceptions of nature, and chastened with the sacred influences of faith.

The reverend author having, before his recent departure for his native land, left the supervision of this work to my care, I feel bound, in justice to his modesty, to state, that the Introduction, taken from the Catholic Almanac, is not from his pen: and he is not, therefore, accountable for the epithets of praise (so eminently deserved, and yet so repugnant to his humility,) which, through it, are occasionally coupled with his name.

The lithographic sketches that accompany this Volume, are copied from the original drawings of the Reverend Father Point, S. J.; drawings of such exquisite perfection, that they would do honor to any master: and the more admirable, from the circumstance of their having been executed with the pen, in the midst of the privations and difficulties of his remote and arduous missions.

In conclusion, I cannot but express the pleasure, instruction, and edification, I have derived from the careful perusal of these beautiful letters; and I feel convinced that they will prove, to all who read them, a source of interest and delight which few volumes of the same dimensions can open to the intellectual and Christian reader.

C. C. P.

New-York, August 1st, 1847.

OREGON MISSIONS.

AN OUTLINE SKETCH

OF

OREGON TERRITORY AND ITS MISSIONS.

THE political discussion, which has been going on for years between the British government and that of the United States, in regard to the boundary which defines their respective portions of the Oregon territory, has turned upon this distant region a large share of public attention, and has won for it an interest which will increase in proportion to the advances of civilization and commerce within its borders. But it becomes an object of much deeper interest in the eyes of the philanthropist and Christian, when we look to the efforts which have been made, and which are still continued, in order to diffuse the blessings of religious truth among its benighted inhabitants. To the Catholic, especially, does this remote country present the most pleasing scenes for contemplation, and by this reason we have been induced to lay before the reader, a brief account of its discovery and settlement, and of the missions undertaken for the spiritual welfare of its inhabitants.

Oregon territory is that important part of North America which extends from the 42d to the 50th degree of N. latitude, and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. It is bounded on the north by the Russian possessions, and on the south by California; forming a kind of parallelogram, about seven hundred and fifty miles in length and five hundred in breadth, and containing 375,000 square miles.

There appears no reason to doubt of the Spaniards having been the first to visit this country. The documents we possess, and the tradition of the natives, concur to render this opinion incontestible. According to them a vessel made its appearance south of the Columbia river before 1792, and there is still living among them a woman whose father was one of the crew attached to the vessel, and whose mother belonged to the tribe of the Kilamukes. When we add to this that crucifixes have been found in their hands transmitted to them from their ancestors, that the island of Vancouver still exhibits the ruins of colonial habitations, that the strait which separates it from the mainland bears the name of *Juan Fuca*, and that the country itself is contiguous to California, where the Spanish missionaries had penetrated nearly two hundred years before, we cannot but look upon the Spaniards as the discoverers of Oregon.

After the voyage of Captain Cook in 1790, by which it was ascertained that the sea along the N. W. coast of America abounded in otters, this region was visited by vessels from almost every part of the world. The people of the United States were not behind others in enterprise; in 1792, Captain Gray sailed up an unknown river of that country, to the distance of eighteen miles, and the stream has since retained the name of *Columbia*, from the ship which he commanded. In leaving the river, Captain Gray passed the vessel of Captain Vancouver, who also navigated the Columbia river about one hundred miles, to the point which bears his name. In 1793 the country was visited by Sir Alexander McKenzie, after discovering the river which retains his name. In 1804, Messrs

Lewis and Clark were commissioned by the United States to explore the sources of the Columbia, and they descended the river as far as Gray's Bay. A few years after, in 1810, Mr. Astor fitted out two expeditions to Oregon, for the purpose of securing the interest of the fur-trade in those parts. The party that had embarked by water arrived first, and erected a fort called Astoria, about nine miles from the mouth of the Columbia. The company of the North-West (English) also considered the fur-trade of Oregon as well worthy of attention, and they immediately despatched an agent by land for the purpose of securing [illegible] he arrived at Astoria several months after the first expeditions from the United States.

During the war of 1812, a British vessel sailed to the Columbia, in order to take posssession of Astoria and its treasure; but the captain was cruelly disappointed in discovering that the place was already held by an agent of the North-West Company, who had purchased it in anticipation of the future war with the United States. The Canadians who had settled there under its original owners, were employed by the new proprietors, and their numbers increased in proportion as the Company extended its operations. In this way the country was visited in every direction, and many of the Indian tribes heard from them of the Catholic religion and the worship of the true God. In 1821, the North-West and Hudson Bay Companies united their interests, and gave a new impulse to the fur-trade. Mr. John McLaughlin, who went to Oregon in 1824, was chiefly instrumental in promoting the prosperity of the country. He added to the business posts, and gave employment to a greater number of Canadians and Iroquois. They commenced at the same time the cultivation of wheat. One of the settlers having undertaken, in 1829, to till the soil in the valley of Willamette, his example was soon followed by others, and the colony became so numerous that in 1834 an application was made to Dr. Provencher, Vicar Apostolic of Hudson Bay, to procure a clergyman for the service of the people. The colonists, however, did not succeed in obtaining a favorable answer to their petition, until the following year, when two clergymen were appointed for the mission; but, owing to the arrival of a Methodist preacher and of an Episcopalian minister in Oregon, the former in 1834, and the latter in 1837, the departure of the Catholic clergymen was considerably delayed. Rev. Mr. Demers went as far as the Red River in 1837, and arrangements having been made for himself and fellow-laborer to pass into Oregon the following year, Rev. F. N. Blanchet left Canada at the appointed time, and joined his companion at Red River, whence they both started on the 10th of July, and after a perilous journey of between four and five thousand miles, and the loss of twelve of their fellow-travellers in the rapids of Columbia River, they arrived at Fort Vancouver, the 24th of November, of the same year. On their route the two missionaries were treated with the utmost courtesy by the traders whom they met, and at Vancouver they were received with every demonstration of respect by James Douglass, Esq., who commanded that post during the absence of Mr. McLaughlin in England. On seeing the missionaries at length among them, the Canadians wept for joy, and the savages assembled from a distance of one hundred miles, to behold the *black gowns* of whom so much had been said.

Before we follow the ministers of God in their apostolic labors, we shall allude as briefly as possible to the aspect of the country, to the difficulties and dangers it presents to the missionary, and to its commercial and agricultural resources.

We shall observe, in the first place, that the Columbia River stretches from its mouth about 290 miles to the east, as far as Fort Walla Walla; it then takes a northerly direction 150 miles, to Fort Okanagan; thence it extends 170 miles easterly to Colville. Fort Vancouver, the principal post in Oregon, is situated in 45° 36′ N. latitude, about one hundred miles from the mouth of the Columbia, and on its western bank, in ascending the river. The Willamette is a tributary of the Columbia, falling into it four miles below Vancouver on the opposite side. Twenty miles up the stream is a cascade of about twenty-five feet, and thirty miles further there is a Canadian establishment, which in 1838 numbered twenty-six Catholic families, besides the settlers from the United States. The residence of the Methodist minister was ten miles higher up. The River Cowlitz falls into the Columbia thirty miles below Vancouver, on the same side. Forty-five miles from its mouth is seen the establishment which bears its name. Four Catholic families resided here on the arrival of the missionaries. From this place to

Nesqualy at the southern extremity of Puget Sound, the distance is nearly seventy miles, and it is equally far from the latter point to the island of Whitby. Two days' journey further north will bring you to the River Frazer, on which Fort Langley is situated. This river falls into Puget Sound or the Gulf of Georgia.

The mission of St. Mary's among the Flatheads is ten days' journey from Colville, towards the south-east, and about five hundred miles from Vancouver. The most distant to which Mr. Demers has penetrated as yet, is Bear Lake in New Caledonia, seven hundred miles from Vancouver. The reader may form some idea of the almost insurmountable difficulties to be encountered by our two missionaries, in visiting their various posts, so widely distant from each other, especially in a country overrun in every direction by lofty mountains. These mountains generally extend from north to south. From the Valley of Willamette are seen three elevated peaks, which have the form of a cone, and are covered with perpetual snow; hence called *Snowy Mountains*. One of them Mt. St. Helena, stands opposite Cowlitz to the east, and for some years past has been noted for its volcanic eruptions.* Besides the rivers we have mentioned, there are several others, the principal of which are the Clamet, Umpqua, and the Chikeeles. The Columbia is navigable as far as the cascade, fifty-four miles above Vancouver.

The immense valleys in Oregon Territory, covered with extensive and fertile prairies, follow the course of the mountains from north to south, and are crossed in different directions by rivulets bordered with trees. They easily yield to the plough, and though the first crop is not very abundant, the second is generally sufficient to repay the labor of tillage. The soil is for the most part fertile, particularly in the south. Every kind of grain is successfully cultivated near Cowlitz, Vancouver, in the Willamette Valley, and further south. The same may be said of the neighborhood of Fort Walla Walla, Colville; the mission of St. Mary's; the mission of the Sacred Heart, of St. Ignatius, and St. Francis Borgia, among the Pend-d'oreilles; of St. Francis Regis, in the valley to Colville; of the Assumption and the Holy Heart of Mary, among the Skalsi. Other districts that are not tillable, afford an excellent pasture for cattle.

---

* Mt. St. Helens was measured by Captain Wilkes, and was made 9,550 feet.

As to the climate of Oregon, it is not so severe as might be supposed from its elevated latitude. The snow never falls to a greater depth than three or four inches in the lower portions of the territory, and seldom remains long on the ground. When the snows, after having accumulated on the mountains and their vicinity in consequence of extreme cold, begin to melt, and the heavy rains supervene, the plains around are covered with water, and sometimes considerable damage is caused by the inundation. The rains commence in October, and continue until March with little interruption. The very cold weather lasts only for a few weeks. In the month of June the Columbia always overflows its banks, from the thaw which takes place on the mountains, and every four or five years its waters rise to an extraordinary height, and do much injury in the vicinity of Vancouver.

Until the year 1830, the Territory of Oregon was thickly settled by numerous tribes of Indians; but at that period the country bordering on the Columbia was visited by a fatal scourge which carried off nearly two-thirds of the inhabitants. It showed itself in the form of an infectious fever, which threw the individual into a state of tremor, and produced such a burning heat throughout the body, that the patient would sometimes cast himself into the water to obtain relief. The population of entire villages was cut off by this terrible pestilence. Other villages were burnt in order to arrest the infection which would have arisen from the pile of dead bodies that were left unburied. During this fearful visitation, which attacked the colonists as well as the natives, Dr. McLaughlin displayed the most heroic philanthrophy, in his laborious attention to the sick and the dying. The Indians superstitiously attributed this scourge to a quarrel between some agents of the Hudson Bay Company and an American captain, which led the latter to throw a species of charm into the river by way of revenge. The fever, however, made its appearance annually, though in a less malignant form; and the inhabitants have discovered both its preventive and its remedy. The smallpox is the principal disease that alarms the natives; they are in continual dread of it, and imagining that they have a short time to live, they no longer build the large and convenient cabins to which they were formerly accustomed. Notwithstanding the ravages above-mentioned, the population of Oregon amounts to nearly 110,000 souls, residing chiefly in the north. This part of the country, fortunately, escaped the diseases which decimated the inhabitants of Willamette and the Columbia, and still rages from time to time in the south.

The tribes of this territory differ much in character and personal appearance. The savages who frequent the coast, especially towards the north, are of a much more barbarous and ferocious temperament than those of the interior; nor are they less dissimilar in their manners, customs, language, and external features. The tribes and languages are almost as numerous as the localities. From twenty-five to thirty different idioms have been distinguished among them, a circumstance which increases in no small degree the labors of the missionary. In the interior of the country, the natives are of a mild and sociable disposition, though proud and vindictive; intelligent though inclined to indolence. Their belief in the immortality of the soul consists in admitting a future existence, happy or unhappy, that is, a state of plenty or want, according to the merits or demerits of every individual. The morals of this savage race can scarcely be termed corrupt, considering their very limited means of "*enlightenment.*" They have distinct ideas of right and wrong, and recognise many leading principles of the natural law. Theft, adultery, homicide, and lying, are condemned as criminal, and if polygamy is tolerated, it is not approved; it is principally confined to the chiefs, by way of maintaining peace with the neighboring nations. Laxity of morals is far short of what might be supposed inevitable, in their rude and uneducated state. Modesty, indeed, would require more; but its rules are for the most part respected. But little intercourse is carried on among young persons of different sex, and even in regard to matrimonial unions, the engagement is arranged by the parents of the parties. When a man of comfortable means takes to himself a wife, he is obliged to compensate the parents of the latter by considerable presents. But upon the death of the woman, these presents may be reclaimed. If in consequence of harsh treatment she puts an end to her existence, the circumstance reflects disgrace upon the husband, who is compelled, in this case, to propitiate her parents by additional gifts.

Most of the work among these savages is performed by slaves, who are well treated, except in case of old age or other inability, when they are left to perish of want. Besides those who are born in this unhappy state, there are others who become so, by the fortunes of war. All prisoners are considered slaves by their conquerors, though, in general, only their children experience this hard lot. Wars are sometimes engaged in for the express purpose of acquiring slaves, which is considered a great advantage among the savages. The white population have little to fear from their attacks, except on the northern coast, where life is far from being safe, and where the natives, in some cases anthropophagi, do not hesitate to feast upon the flesh of their prisoners.

Throughout the whole country, the habitations of the Indians are rather huts than houses, from fifteen to twenty-five feet long, proportionably wide, and verging into a conical form. Cross pieces of wood are suspended in the interior for the purpose of drying their salmon and other articles of food. Fire is kindled on the ground in the centre of the cabin, the smoke escaping through the roof above. The dress of the Indians is not more *recherché* than their dwellings. Formerly, they clothed themselves very comfortably and neatly, with the furs which they possessed, but since the trade in skins has become so extensive, the natives of Oregon are much worse provided for in this respect, and the poor can scarcely protect themselves against the severity of the seasons. To this circumstance, in part, is attributed the decrease of the population, which has been observed within a few years past. Hunting and fishing are the resources on which the Indian depends for subsistence. His principal food is salmon, sturgeon, and other kinds of fish, with the ducks, wild turkeys and hares, in which the country abounds. The fruits of spontaneous growth, and particularly the root of the *cammas*, also afford them nourishment.

Among the aborigines of Oregon there is no trace of any religious worship. They have a belief which consists in certain obscure traditions;* but no external forms of religion are visible among them. The juggler exercises his profession, though it is almost universally done in behalf of the sick, for the purpose of curing them. If he fail in his attempt, he is suspected of having used some evil influence, and is made to pay the forfeit of his supposed offence. Though nearly all these tribes, of whom we are speaking, possess no particular form of worship, they are naturally predisposed in favor of the Christian religion, especially those who live in the interior. We shall find the most ample evidence of this in the sequel of our narrative.

---

* The Chinook and Kilamuke tribes on the coast call their most powerful god by the name of Ikani, and to him they ascribe the creation of all things. The god who made the Columbia river and the fish in it they call Italupus.—Expl. Exp., vol. v., p. 119.

At the period when the two Catholic missionaries arrived in Oregon territory, the Hudson Bay Company possessed from ten to twelve establishments for the fur-trade, in each of which there was a certain number of Canadians professing our holy faith, and in addition to these there were twenty-six Catholic families at Willamette, and four at Cowlitz. It is easy to imagine to how many dangers they had been exposed of losing their faith, deprived as they were of religious instruction and of every external incentive to the practice of piety, and surrounded by individuals who were not inactive in their efforts to withdraw them from the fold of Catholicity.

The Methodist missionaries had already formed two establishments, one in the Willamette, where they had a school, and another about fifty miles from the cascade. An Anglican minister, who resided at Vancouver two years, left it before the arrival of the Catholic clergy. The Presbyterians had a missionary post at Walla Walla, and among the Nez-percés, and in 1839 they established a third station on the river Spokane, a few days' journey south of Colville. In 1840, the Rev. Mr. Lee brought with him fellow-laborers for the vineyard, with their wives and children, and a number of husbandmen and mechanics. It was a real colony. The preachers stationed themselves at the most important posts, as at Willamette Falls, the Clatsops below fort George, and Nisqualy, and thence visited the other settlements: they even penetrated as far as Whitby. Nothing short of the most arduous toil and constant vigilance on the part of the Catholic clergymen, could have withdrawn so many individuals from the danger of spiritual seduction. Our two missionaries were indefatigable in their exertions, almost always journeying from one post to another, to begin or to consolidate the good work they had in view.

Vancouver was the first place that experienced the happy influence of their apostolical zeal. Many of the settlers had lost sight of the religious principles they had imbibed in their youth, and their wives were either pagans in belief, or, if baptized, but superficially acquainted with the nature of that holy rite. In this state of things, which had given rise to many disorders, the missionaries found it necessary to spend several months at Vancouver, and to labor with united energies in instructing the people, baptizing children, performing marriages, and inspiring a greater respect for the Christian virtues. With this view they remained at Vancouver until the month of January, 1839, when Mr. Blanchet visited the Canadians at Willamette. It would be difficult to describe the joy which his arrival awakened among them. They had already erected a chapel seventy feet in length, which was dedicated by the missionary under the invocation of St. Paul. His ministry at this place was attended with the most signal success. Men, women and children, all seemed to appreciate the presence of one who had come, as a messenger from Heaven, to diffuse among them the consolations of religion. Before his departure, Mr. Blanchet rehabilitated a good number of marriages, and baptized seventy-four persons. In April he started for Cowlitz, where he remained until the latter end of June. Here also his efforts were most successful. He had the happiness of instructing twelve savages of Puget sound, who had come from a distance of nearly one hundred miles in order to see and hear him. It was on this occasion he conceived the idea of the Catholic *ladder*, a form of instruction which represents on paper the various truths and mysteries of religion in their chronological order, and which has proved vastly beneficial in imparting catechetical instruction among the natives of Oregon. These twelve Indians having remained at Cowlitz long enough to acquire a knowledge of the principal mysteries of our faith, and to understand the use of the *ladder* which Mr. Blanchet gave them, set about instructing their tribe as soon as they returned home, and not without considerable success; for Mr. Blanchet, the following year, met, in the vicinity of Whitby island, with several Indians who had never seen a priest, and yet were acquainted with the sign of the cross, and knew several pious canticles.

While Mr. Blanchet was at Cowlitz,* his fellow-laborer visited Nisqualy, where he found the savages in the best dispositions. Having but a short time, however, to pass among them, he merely laid the foundation of a more important mission, and returned to Vancouver by the month of June,—the time when the agents from New Caledonia, Upper Columbia, and other different posts assemble there to deposite their furs. After spending a month at Vancouver, availing himself of the favorable opportunity for instruction which the concourse of visiters afforded, he set out for Upper Columbia, where he visited Walla Walla, Okanagan and Colville, baptizing all the children that were brought to him in the course of his journey. He spent three months in this excursion, during which Mr. Blanchet attended to the wants of the faithful at Vancouver, Willamette, and

---

* Speaking of the farm belonging to the Hudson Bay Company at Cowlitz, Capt. Wilkes says: "The grounds appear well prepared, and were covered with a luxuriant crop of wheat, (May, 1841). At the farther end of the prairie was to be seen a settlement, with its orchards, &c., and between the trees, the chapel and parsonage of the Catholic mission gave an air of civilization to the whole. The degree of progress resembles that of a settlement of several years' standing in our western states," &c.—*Explor. Exped.*, vol. iv., p. 315.

Cowlitz. Though these stations afforded ample occupation for a missionary, Mr. B. paid another visit to Nisqualy, where he was again met by a considerable number of savages from Puget sound, who hastened to Nisqualy as soon as they heard of his arrival, and listened with joy and profit to the words of life.

In October the two missionaries met at Vancouver, which was their place of residence through the courtesy of James Douglas, Esq., and on the 10th of the same month they again separated, Mr. Blanchet starting for Willamette, and Mr. Demers for Cowlitz. Their object was to spend the winter months at these points in the further instruction of their flocks. During the first year they baptized three hundred and nine persons. The following spring Mr. Demers visited the Chinouks, a tribe living below fort George. From the Chinouks he repaired to Vancouver, to meet the concourse of traders who assemble there in the month of June, after which he set out for his stations at Walla Walla, Okanagan and Colville, as he had done the preceding year. About this time Father De Smet, S. J., was sent on a visit by his superior to the Flathead Indians, who had implored this favor by repeated deputations from their country to the bishop of St. Louis. He found, to his great surprise, that Oregon already possessed two Catholic missionaries; he wrote to Mr. Demers, informing him that he would return to St. Louis, according to the order of his superiors, to procure further aid for the promising missions of the Rocky Mountains.

Mr. Blanchet having visited the people at Nisqualy, was soon called away by a special embassy from the Indians of Puget sound, who requested his ministry. It was on this occasion at Whitby that he met with the savages already acquainted with certain practices of the Catholic church, though they had never seen a missionary.* His labors among the Indians at this place were most consoling. A large cross was erected as a rallying-point, many children were baptized, and two tribes, who were at war with each other, were reconciled. The Catholic *ladder* was passed from one nation to another, and all prayed to be instructed still more fully in the truths of salvation. After baptizing one hundred and four persons, the missionaries returned to Vancouver, and thence repaired to their respective stations during the winter season. A wide field was here opened to their zeal, not only among the catechumens who solicited baptism, but among the settlers, who were anxious to repair by their fervor the neglect of former years. In the summer of 1840 the Columbia was visited by Captain Belcher, from England, for the purpose of surveying the river.

---

* Of the Catholic mission at Penn's cove, between Whitby's Island and the main, Mr. Wilkes says: "It (the island) is in possession of the Sacket tribe, who have here a permanent settlement, consisting of large and well-built lodges of timber and planks. . . This whole tribe are Catholics, and have much affection and reverence for their instructors." After speaking of the good feeling promoted among the Indians by the Catholic clergymen, he continues: "Besides inculcating good morals and peace, the priests are inducing the Indians to cultivate the soil, and there was an enclosure of some three or four acres, in which potatoes and beans were growing."

In the spring of 1841, Mr. Demers, after giving the usual mission at Vancouver, went to Nisqualy, and with the aid of Indian guides penetrated as far as Fort Langley on the river Fraser. Here he was surrounded by an immense number of savages, to whom he announced without delay the tidings of salvation. His appeal was not in vain, all permitting their children to be baptized, and soliciting the residence of a priest among them. Seven hundred children received, on this occasion, the sacrament of regeneration. While Mr. Demers was thus occupied in gathering the first fruits of the mission at Puget sound, Mr. Blanchet was equally engaged at Willamette, Vancouver, Cowlitz and the Cascades. At the last mentioned place several children were baptized, and a number of adults instructed in the faith.

During the year 1841, Oregon Territory was visited by two expeditions, one from England under Sir George Simpson, and the other from the U. States, under the command of Captain Wilkes.*

---

* "We stopped for a few hours at the Catholic mission," says Capt. Wilkes, "to call upon the Rev. Mr. Bachelet (Blanchet), to whom I had a note of introduction from Dr. McLaughlin ; he received me with great kindness. Mr. B. is here settled among his flock, and is doing great good to the settlers in ministering to their temporal as well as spiritual wants. . . . Mr. Drayton, Michael, and myself, dined with Mr. B. on oatmeal porridge, venison, strawberries and cream. His hospitality was tendered with good and kind feelings, and with a gentlemanly deportment that spoke much in his favor, and made us regret to leave his company so soon." Mr. Wilkes represents the missions here and the farms of the Canadians, in a thriving state. He has incorrectly given the name *Bachelet* to Mr. Blanchet, superior of the Oregon mission, who was recently consecrated vicar-apostolic of that country.—*Explor. Exp.*, vol. 4, p. 350.

Of the Methodist mission at Willamette, Mr. Wilkes says: "About all the premises of this mission there was an evident

Faithful to his word, Father De Smet returned among the Flatheads in the autumn of the same year, accompanied by the Rev. [illegible] Point and Mengarini, and three lay [illegible] The mission of St. Mary's was at once [illegible]lished, and the most abundant harvest collected, (see Indian sketches). About the same time Messrs. Blanchet and Demers retired to their usual winter stations, where they had the pleasure of learning that two other missionaries, Messrs. John B. Bolduc and Ant. Langlois had

---

want of the attention required to keep things in repair, and an absence of neatness that I regretted much to witness. We left the expectation of getting a sight of the Indians on whom they were inculcating good habits, and teaching the word of God: but with the exception of four Indian servants, we saw none since leaving the Catholic mission."—*Ibid.* p. 351, 2. At this latter mission he numbers four or five hundred natives. The Methodists had a school of twenty pupils at some distance.

Near Port Orchard the chapel of the Catholic [illegible] feet long by 72 wide. "Many of the natives," says Mr. Wilkes, "are capable of saying their prayers and telling their beads, and some were met with who could sing some Catholic hymns in their own language."

Of the Protestant missions at Clatsop, Capt. Wilkes observes: "There appeared to me to be little opportunity for exercising their ministerial calling, though I understood afterwards that at particular seasons a number of Indians collected to hear them."—Vol. iv., p. 322.

set out from Canada to join them in their labor of love. During the winter, Mr. Blanchet narrowly escaped a watery grave, in ascending the river Willamette on a visit to his friend Mr. Demers. In the spring of 1842, Father De Smet unexpectedly made his appearance at Vancouver, after a providential escape from shipwreck, in descending the river Columbia. Fortunately he had left the barge in which his fellow-travellers and his baggage were; and by this means he was saved, while his effects and five of his companions were swallowed up in the rapids.

The three missionaries met together, first at Willamette, and then at Vancouver, and formed their plans for a concert of action in the great work of evangelizing the natives of Oregon. The Indians of New Caledonia had repeatedly asked for Catholic missionaries, and Mr. Demers started for that country. Having embarked in a boat of the Hudson Bay Company, he reached his destination after a travel of two months. The journey, though fatiguing, was most consoling in its results. He was received by the savages with open arms, and it is impossible to describe the ardor with which they drank in the words of heavenly life as they fell from his lips. The Indians in this region appear to be no less predisposed to receive the truths of Christianity than the Flatheads, who have evinced a peculiar propensity to virtue.

While Mr. Demers was so successfully occupied among the tribes of New Caledonia, Father De Smet was bending his steps back to St. Louis, to procure additional laborers for the mission. Two clergymen, the Rev. Fathers De Vos and Hoeken, with three lay brothers, were immediately sent out, but they did not reach their destination until the autumn of 1843. Mr. De Smet was at the same time despatched to Europe, to make further provision for the conversion and civilization of Oregon. In this way Mr. Blanchet found himself charged with the care of all the stations, except those among the Flatheads, and upper Indians of the Columbia, and was continually moving about to meet the wants of the various missions. Fortunately Messrs. Langlois and Bolduc, after a journey of one year since their departure from Canada, arrived at Willamette on the 16th of September. They at once set themselves to work, Mr. Langlois remaining at Willamette during the winter season, while Mr. Blanchet was at Vancouver, and Mr. Bolduc at Cowlitz. In the spring of 1843, Mr. Demers returned from New Caledonia, much exhausted by the labors he had undergone, and the privations he had suffered during his journey; but these causes were not capable of diminishing his missionary ardor. His fellow-laborers and himself found ample occupation, during the summer months, at the three principal stations, and in fact such was the call upon their services at these posts, and in the vicinity, in consequence of the increasing numbers of their flock, that they were unable to visit the more distant points, and were obliged to defer to a later period the execution of their design, for some time contemplated, of forming a mission at Whitby.

In addition to his numerous cares, Mr. Blanchet undertook the erection of an academy at Willamette, for which funds had been given by a Mr. Joseph Laroque of Paris, and which is called St. Joseph's College, in honor of that gentleman.

A teacher of French, and another of the English language, were employed in the institution, which was opened in the month of October, and numbered from the very commencement twenty-eight boarders. Rev. Mr. Langlois, who attended to the Willamette mission, also superintended the Academy.

About a year after, a public examination of the students was held, and the inhabitants who attended, appeared much gratified at the progress made by the pupils in the study of French and English, in writing, arithmetic, and other branches.

In the spring of 1844, Mr. Blanchet withdrew Mr. Demers from Cowlitz and placed him at the *Falls* or Oregon City, an important post, which contained already sixty houses. The parsonage where Mr. Demers resided could not be rented at less than ten dollars a month. Mr. Bolduc remained at Cowlitz, and Mr. Blanchet went from one station to another, to ascertain and provide for the wants of the different localities.

During the vacation of the college Mr. Blanchet remained at Willamette, to replace Mr. Langlois, who had set out upon a visit to the Jesuit fathers, among the Flatheads, with a view to obtain some assistance for his school. Mr. Demers was at this time at Vancouver. The missionaries, not aware of Mr. De Smet's voyage to Europe, had been long and anxiously awaiting his arrival in Oregon. About fifteen months had elapsed since his departure for the east, and the vessel of the Hudson Bay Company, which had reached Oregon in the spring, brought no intelligence respecting his movements. Under these circumstances, Mr. Blanchet and his companions began to be alarmed, when, in the midst of their apprehensions, the indefatible Jesuit made his appearance suddenly at Vancouver, about the beginning of August. On the 9th of January, he had left Belgium, with four priests. Rev. Fathers Accolti, Nobili, Ravalli, and Vercruysse and Huybrechts a lay brother, and six religious ladies of Notre Dame of Namur, and after doubling Cape Horn the vessel touched at Valparaiso and Lima, for the purpose of obtaining some information regarding the entrance of the Columbia River and to leave a part of a cargo. Not having received a satisfactory answer to their inquiries, they set out again for the north, and continued their course until they found themselves in latitude 46° 19′, and longitude 123° 54′. Here the captain passed three days in discovering the mouth of the river, which was at length made known to him by the sight of a vessel going out. Though it was growing dark, he immediately despatched an officer towards the sail to make inquiries concerning the mode of entering the Columbia; but he did not return with the required information, and the captain, being thrown upon his own resources, at once made preparations for entering the river, and proceeded from east to west through a channel altogether unknown to him. It was the 31st of July, feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola. As he advanced, by the soundings, he found that the vessel was in very shallow water, having only two and a half feet under her keel, although at a considerable distance from the mainland. At this moment, the safety of the vessel and crew seemed hopeless; but while shipwreck was staring them in the face, they fell unexpectedly into deeper soundings; the bar was crossed, and two hours after, the vessel anchored off Fort George or *Astoria*.[*]

---

[*] On the bar of the Columbia River occurred the wreck of the *Peacock*, one of the vessels attached to the Exploring Expedition. A thrilling account of this event is given in Capt. Wilkes' Narrative. Of the bar itself he says: "Mere description can give little idea of the terrors of the bar of the Columbia; all who have seen it have spoken of the wildness of the scene, and the incessant roar of the waters, representing it as one of the most fearful sights that can possibly meet the eye of the sailor. The difficulty of its channel, the distance of the leading sailing marks, their uncertainty to one unacquainted with them, the want of knowledge of the strength and direction of the currents, with the necessity of

Mr. Blanchet and the people of Willamette no sooner heard of Mr. De Smet's arrival at Vancouver than they hastened to meet him. The good father and the colony that accompanied him, were received with every demonstration of civility by Dr. McLaughlin and Mr. Douglas, who also tendered one of the company's boats to convey the missionary band to Willamette. Their journey to this place was a real triumph, such was the joy and excitement produced among the inhabitants by the accession of these new laborers to the vineyard. The sisters *Notre Dame* soon occupied the building which had been undertaken for their purposes, and in the month of December it was opened as a boarding academy for girls. Father De Smet, about the same time, directed his course towards the Flatheads, Father Devos having come to supply his place in the south. The labors of the Jesuits among the tribes of the north have been crowned with the most abundant success. In 1842, a new mission, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, was founded about eight days' journey south of St. Mary's. In addition to the increased re-

approaching close to unseen dangers, the transition from clear to turbid water, all cause doubt and mistrust. Under such feelings, I must confess that I felt myself laboring."—Vol. iv., p. 293.

sources which the mission received in 1844, we must mention also the arrival of two other Jesuit Fathers and one lay brother, who went to Oregon, by the way of the Rocky Mountains.

Such was the state of the country, and such the progress of religion among the natives and colonists, when Mr. Blanchet received letters from Canada in November last, informing him that, upon the application of the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, he had been appointed Vicar Apostolic of Oregon Territory, and that bulls to that effect, dated the 1st December, 1843, had been despatched to him. He was immediately solicited by his fellow-laborers to accept the charge, and at first determined to go to California for the ceremony of consecration. But desirous of obtaining a further reinforcement for his extensive mission, he concluded to visit Europe. Having appointed Rev. Mr. Demers his *Vicar General* and *administrator* of the Vicariate during his absence, he left Vancouver towards the end of November, arrived on the 22d of May at London, and thence embarking for this country the 4th of June, in the Cunard line of steamers, he reached Canada on the 24th of the same month, after a journey of more than 22,000 miles. Mr. Blanchet recently received the episcopal consecration in Montreal, and has gone to Europe on business connected with his mission. Six thousand savages brought within the fold of the Christian church, form, indeed, but a small number among the 100,000 who inhabit that immense region; but this success, achieved in a few years, by a missionary force so limited, and compelled to grapple with so many difficulties, is a bright and consoling evidence of what can and will be accomplished by those who have been commissioned to "go and teach all nations."

On the 1st of December, 1843, his Holiness, Gregory XVI, erected Oregon Territory into an Apostolic Vicariate, and the Rev. Francis N. Blanchet, was appointed to the episcopal charge of this extensive mission. His consecration took place in Montreal, C. E., about the middle of the year 1844. He immediately repaired to Europe, with a view to increase the resources of his mission, and to devise means for promoting the interests of religion in Oregon. At his request, and by a recent act of the Holy See, the Territory of Oregon, from the 42d to the 54th degree of N. latitude, has been divided into eight dioceses, viz: Oregon City, Nesqualy, Vancouver's Island, and Princess Charlotte, on the coast, and Walla Walla, Fort Hall, Colville, and New Caledonia, in the interior. These dioceses form an ecclesiastical province, of which Oregon City is the Metropolitan See. For the present, only three bishops are appointed for the province, viz: those of Oregon City, Walla Walla, and Vancouver's Island, who will have a provisional jurisdiction over the other dioceses. The episcopal districts of *Vancouver's Island, Princess Charlotte,* and *New Caledonia,* are not included within the territory belonging to the United States. The Rt. Rev. Modest Demers, one of the missionaries that visited Oregon in 1838, has been charged with the See of Vancouver's Island, and the administration of the two other districts in the British portion of the territory. The region within the limits of the United States embraces the five other dioceses above-mentioned.

ARCHDIOCESS OF OREGON CITY.

This district is under the jurisdiction of the Rt. Rev. F. N. Blanchet, who has also the administration of Nesqualy.

DIOCESS OF WALLA WALLA.

This diocess is under the charge of the Rt.

Rev. Magloire Blanchet, who was consecrated in Montreal, on the 27th of September, 1846. He has also the present administration of Fort Hall and Colville.

The following clergymen are engaged in the missions of Oregon:—

Rev. Accolti, Michael,
" De Smet, Peter J.,
" De Vos, Peter,
" Hoecken, Adrian.
" Joset, Joseph,
" Mengarini, Gregory,
" Nobili, John,
" Point, Nicholas,
" Ravalli, Anthony,
" Vercruysse, Aloysius,
" Langlois, Anthony,
" Bolduc, John Baptist,

Who are all, with the exception of the last two, members of the Society of Jesus.

Archbishop Blanchet lately embarked from Europe, on his way to Oregon, with ten secular priests and two regulars, three lay brothers of the Society of Jesus, and seven female religious, for the wants of the mission. The total number of clergymen is twenty-six.

Our information is not sufficiently detailed, to allow us to present the religious statistics of the different dioceses into which Oregon has been divided. We can only state in general, that since the year 1845, several new stations have been formed, new churches erected, and a large number of the aborigines of various tribes converted to the true faith.

The state of religion is as follows: there are eighteen chapels, viz.: five in the Willamette Valley; St. Paul's Cathedral; St. Mary's at the Convent of the Sisters; St. Francis Xaverius' Chapel; the new church in the Prairie; St. John's Church in Oregon City; one at Vancouver; one at Cowlitz; one at Whitby; four in New Caledonia, to wit: at Stuart's Lake, at Fort Alexandria, at the Rapids, and at the Upper Lake; St. Mary's Church among the Flatheads; the Church of the Sacred Heart among the Pointed-Hearts; the Church of St. Ignatius among the Pend-d'oreilles of the Bay; the Chapel of St. Paul among the Kettle-Fall Tribe near Colville. The following are stations of 1846, where chapels are to be erected, to wit: St. Francis Borgia among the Upper Kalispels; St. Francis Regis in Colville Valley; St. Peter's at the great Lakes of the Columbia; the Assumption among the Flatbow Indians; the Holy Heart of Mary among the Koetenais.

The institutions that have been commenced in Oregon, consist: 1st, of the school of St. Mary's among the Flatheads; 2d, of a college at St. Paul's, Willamette; and 3d, of an academy for girls at the same place, under the charge of six sisters of Notre Dame. Other establishments are soon to be commenced.

The total number of Indians in the territory is about 110,000, of whom upwards of 6,000 have been converted to the true faith. The number of Catholics among the Canadians and settlers amounts to about 1,500.

No. I.

LETTER OF MR. BOLDUC,

APOSTOLICAL MISSIONARY.

To Mr. Cayenne.

Cowlitz, 15th Feb., 1844.

Sir,—Nearly a year has elapsed since I had the satisfaction of addressing you. During that period, I have made many new excursions, of which I now intend giving you an account.

From the observations made by the first English navigators who visited the coasts of America towards the north of the Columbia River, it appears that the territory bearing the same name, was formerly discovered and peopled by Spaniards. Even at the present day, we find ruins of birch edifices, constructed for the purpose of drawing the savage nations to the knowledge of the gospel. Among the natives, relics have been found attesting this fact; a certain tribe has possessed for ages a brazen crucifix, bearing the appearance of great antiquity, when, how, and by whom it was brought thither, none can tell. It is probable it may have been introduced at that period, when the Spaniards seized on California, and formed a settlement on Vancouver's Island, separated from Terra Firma by the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Gray discovered the Columbia River; Vancouver ascended it to the point whereon is built the fort that bears his name, and took possession of the surrounding country.

The vast territory extending between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean is divided into two zones, differing in their climate, soil and productions. The line of separation runs parallel to the coasts of the South Sea, from which it is distant about 200 miles. Less woody than the regions of the West, the eastern part rises into table-land, which forms the basis of the Mounts Hood, St. Helena, Reignier, and Baker. The summits of these mountains rise to the height of 15 or 16,000 feet, and are crowned with eternal snow. Last year, Mounts St. Helena and Baker became volcanoes. The latter, within the last few months, has undergone considerable changes on the side where the crater was formed.

In the oriental zone the climate is dry and salubrious; in winter as well as summer, rain is very rare. Snow never covers the earth more than a foot deep; no marshy land is to be found; and the air being neither foggy nor misty every species of fever is totally unknown. In the inferior part, from October to March, the rains are continual; thick clouds envelope the atmosphere, and hide the sun for entire weeks. When the vapours no longer obscure the air, a mild and vivifying heat is diffused around. This winter has been quite remarkable by the small quantity of rain. During the greater part of February and the beginning of March, the weather was delightful, we could have imagined ourselves in May. The grass was verdant in the meadows, and strawberries were in full bloom.

In March, rain seldom falls; a glowing sun reanimates nature, which soon appears in her gayest attire. Wheat sown in autumn surpasses in April, that which we are accustomed to behold in Canada in the month of June.

During summer the weather is clear and sultry, sometimes, however, thick clouds gather around, and appear as if they would burst in torrents over our heads, but they are soon dissipated without thunder, and without shedding on the earth a drop of that moisture which she seems to require to perfect her harvest.

In June, the rivers, swollen by the melted snow, inundate the plains, and increase the stagnant water formed by the rains of winter. The vapors arising from the influence of a meridian sun, cause fever and ague, which are more frequent when the rivers overflow their banks. This malady reigns throughout the country from the end of August to the middle of October, and persons once attacked generally suffer from its baneful effects for several years; and as I have not escaped this year, I have every reason to dread a recurrence in the future. You could scarcely credit the relation of the terrible ravages which this epidemic causes among the numerous tribes inhabiting the shores of the Columbia. Entire camps have been swept away by this fatal scourge. When the savages find themselves attacked by it, they hasten to plunge into the cold rivers, and die immediately. The whites with proper attention baffle the distemper.

I informed you last year, that I intended opening a mission at Puget Sound; and hoped, if possible, to reach Vancouver's Island; this project has been executed, and I will now give you a few details.

To attain this object, I thought it better not to go alone on the island; no priest had as yet trodden the soil, and the savages were little familiarized with the whites. Happily, the Hon. Hudson Bay Company was about constructing a fort at the southern extremity of the island. Mr. Douglas, the director of this expedition, generously invited me to take my passage on board his vessel. Most willingly did I accept the kind offer, and quitted Cowlitz 7th of March, for Shwally. The Steamboat Beaver awaited us some days; for, having several preparations to make, we did not get on board before the morning of the 13th. After having pursued our course during the day, towards evening we cast anchor in still water, at a place named Pointe Perdrix, formed by a projection of the Isle Whitby. Fishing lines were soon prepared, and we had the satisfaction of procuring an excellent dinner for the next day. We caught a quantity of beautiful fish, not unlike the cod of Canada, some of them were four feet in length.

The waters of Puget Bay are richly stocked; salmon abound, and form one of the principal resources of the natives. In July, August and September, more are taken than can be consumed. A small fish, peculiar to the north-western coast is here found; it comes up the rivers in spring, and contains such a quantity of oil, that when dried and lit by the tail it burns like a candle. From this fish the savages extract excellent oil, which they use for seasoning their food. Early on the 14th we raised anchor and directed our course towards Juan de Fuca Strait. We landed, and after having visited a small camp of savages, belonging to the Tribe of Klalanes, we bore away for the southern point of Vancouver's Island, whither we arrived about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. At first, only two canoes were perceived; but, after a discharge of cannon, we saw the natives issuing from their haunts and surrounding the steamboat. Next morning, the pirogues (Indian boats) came from every side. I went on shore with the commander of the expedition and the captain of the vessel; having received unequivocal proofs of the good-will of the Indians, I visited their village situated six miles from the port, at the extremity of the bay.

Like the surrounding tribes, this one possessed a little fortress, formed by stakes enclosing about 150 square feet. The inhabitants endeavor to secure themselves in this manner from the incursions of the Toungletats, a powerful and warlike tribe; one part of which encamps on Vancouver's Island, the other on the continent, north of Frazer's River. These ferocious enemies enter the villages by night, massacre all the men, and carry off the women and children whom they reduce to slavery. On my arrival, all the tribe, men, women and children, assembled to shake hands with me; a ceremony which these savages never omit. They repaired to the great lodge belonging to their chief, where I spoke to them concerning the existence of a God, the Creator of all things; of the recompense promised to good actions, and the eternal chastisements which await the commission of crime. My instructions were often interrupted by the harangues of my auditors. The following one may prove interesting: "Chief, listen to my words; ten years ago, I heard that there was a Master above, who hated evil; and that among the French, men were to be found who taught the knowledge of this Master. I also heard that men of this description would come to our home. Since that time, my heart, which was formerly very wicked, has become good; I no longer do evil; and since you are come, all hearts are filled with joy."

Another day, whilst I was speaking of baptism, and recounting to them that several nations had caused their children to be baptized, a man arose and said: "Thy words are good, but we have been told that all who were baptized among the Kwaitlens, and the Kawitskins (near Frazer River), died immediately; however, since thou sayest it is a good thing, we believe thee. If the sacred water will cause us to see the Great Master after death, baptize all our camp; perform this charity, for they nearly all die." I promised, I would return the following Sunday, and confer the sacrament.

My arrival being noised abroad, several neighboring nations came hither in crowds. Saturday, the 18th, was employed in constructing a kind of repository, whereon to celebrate mass the ensuing morn. Mr. Douglas gave me several of his men to aid in the work. Branches of fir-trees formed the sides of this rustic chapel; and the awning of the boat, its canopy. Early Sunday morning, more than twelve hundred savages, belonging to the three great tribes, Kawitskins, Klalams, and Isanisks, were assembled in this modest sanctuary. Our commander neglected nothing that could render the ceremony imposing; he gave me liberty to choose on board, all that could serve for its decoration. He assisted at the mass with some Canadians, with two Catholic ladies. It was in the midst of this numerous assembly, that, for the first time, the sacred mysteries were celebrated; may the blood of the Spotless Lamb, fertilize this barren land, and cause it to produce an abundant harvest. This being the day fixed for the baptism of the children, I repaired to the principal village accompanied by all who had assisted at the divine service. On arriving, I was again compelled to present my hand to about 600 persons. The children were arranged along the sea-coast; I distributed to each a small piece of paper with a name written thereon; and immediately commenced the ceremony. It was about ten o'clock in the morning, and I did not finish before night, the new Christians numbered 102. Though much exhausted, I was obliged to walk two leagues to rejoin the steamboat.

According to the plan traced out for our voyage, we were to remain here but a few days; and then continue our course from fort to fort, until we arrived at the Russian establishment at Sitka, but the little vessel bearing the provisions, came not. This delay grieved me much, for the grand vicar had communicated to me his intention of establishing at the beginning of summer, a mission in Whitby Isle, and also of employing me in this work of zeal. Fearing I would not return in time if I delayed my departure, I resolved immediately to retrace my steps. I purchased a canoe, and engaged the chief of the Isanisks and ten of his men to conduct me direct to Whitby Isle. I quitted Vancouver the 24th of March, bearing with me the most lively sentiments of gratitude towards the commander of the expedition and Captain Brotchie, for all their kind and delicate attentions. The sea was calm, but the atmosphere clouded; luckily, I took with me a compass, otherwise I should have strayed from my course, having twenty-seven miles to traverse. The first day we reached a little island between the extremity of Vancouver and the continent where we passed the night. My Indians, having shot a sea-wolf, made a great feast. You would scarcely believe how much a savage can devour at a repast; but if he is voracious in time of plenty, he knows how to fast several successive days without enduring much fatigue.

The 25th there arose a strong north-westerly breeze. The rowers, before quitting the coast, ascended a hill to ascertain if the sea was much agitated in the middle of the strait; they were some time before they could decide the point; at last they declared, that with the aid of a sail, we might brave the danger. A mast was prepared, a blanket affixed to it, and thus equipped we confided ourselves to the mercy of the waves. Towards three o'clock we landed at the isle of Whitby; not, however, without experiencing some danger.

A great number of savage Klalams and Skadjats came to meet us; I knew, by reputation, the chief of the Skadjats, and asked to see him. They replied that he had left two days previously, to meet me at Vancouver's island. His two sons presented themselves; one of them, pressing my hand, said, "My father, Netlan, is not here, he is gone to [illegible] (this is the name of the southern point of Vancouver's island); when he learns [illegible] he will soon return. He will [illegible] thou wilt remain among us, for he is [illegible] '*Mass*' every Sunday, and [illegible] people." Later, I was informed that his Mass consisted in explaining to the savages of his tribe the chronological history of religion (traced on a map), [illegible] teaching them to make numberless signs of the cross, and singing a few canticles with the *Kyrie Eleison*.

I pitched my tent near the cross planted by Mr. Blanchet when he first landed in the island, in 1840. The next morning all the camp of the Skadjats surrounded me to hear the word of God. You may form some idea of the population of this tribe when I tell you, that I gave my hand to a file of 650 persons, besides 150 others who had passed the night near my tent not included in this number: and nearly all the old men and women, besides the children, had remained in their huts. After the instruction, several canticles were chanted in such full chorus that the sound was deafening.

Several parents had begged me to baptize their children. I repaired to the village and requested to see all the children, under seven, who had not received the grace of regeneration. Not one was forgotten; there were 150 present. The ceremony took place in a little meadow, surrounded by lofty and antique fir-trees. It was near ten o'clock when I began the administration of the sacrament, and I did not finish before sun-set. The day was most beautiful, but the ardent rays of the sun joined to the want of a substantial breakfast, caused me to suffer much by a violent headache [illegible] the chief of the Skadjats declared to me that I ought not to be lodged in a cotton house (under a tent); "for this reason," added he, "to-morrow thou must tell me in what place we [illegible] construct thee an abode, and thou wilt [illegible] powerful is the effect of my words when [illegible] to my people." Beholding the good-will of the chief, I pointed out a little [illegible] Immediately afterward I saw two hundred workmen, some having hatchets to fell the [illegible] others preparing to remove them; four of the most skilful undertook the arrangement of the edifice. In two days all was terminated, [illegible] I found myself installed in a house [illegible] long by 25 in width. The wood was [illegible] roof covered with cedar bark, and the interior [illegible] laid with rush mats. During the week I gave them several instructions, and taught them some canticles—for without singing [illegible] things are of little value; nothing [illegible] to their enjoyment.

I had terminated the exercises of [illegible] when several savages arrived from the continent; as soon as they perceived me they cast themselves on their knees, exclaiming, "Priest, priest, during four days we have travelled to [illegible] beheld thee, we have walked night and day, and have scarcely tasted any food; now that we see thee our hearts are joyful, take pity on us; we have learned that there is a Master on high, but we know not how to speak to him. Come with us, thou wilt baptize our children as thou didst those of the Skadjats." I was moved by these words, and would willingly have followed them to their forests, but it was impossible to do so, my intended arrival having been announced at Skwally. I quitted these good Indians the [illegible] April; during my abode among them, I experienced nothing but consolations which surpassed all my expectations.

By this relation you will perceive, sir, that the savages of Puget Bay show much zeal for religion, yet they do not understand the full extent of the term. If to be a Christian it were but necessary to know some prayers, and sing canticles, there is not one among them who would not adopt the title; but a capital point still to be gained is, a reformation of morals. As soon as we touch this chord, their ardor is changed into indifference. In vain the chieftains harangue their inferiors; how can they expect to make any impression where they are themselves the more guilty!

I do not mistrust Divine Providence, but I may say, without exposing myself to illusion, that our best hopes are centred in the tribes inhabiting the coasts of the ocean, or which are settled at the mouth of the numerous tributaries.

Sir, I have the honor to remain,
Your very humble and obedient
servant in Jesus Christ,
J. B. Z. BOLDUC,
Apostolical Missionary.

No. I.

A. M. D. G.

Sainte Marie du Willamette,
9th October, 1844.

MY DEAR BROTHER,—On the 28th July, after a tedious navigation of nearly eight months, we came in sight of the Oregon Territory. Oh! with what transports of delight we hailed these long-desired shores. What heartfelt thanksgivings burst from every tongue. All, with one accord, entoned that magnificent hymn of praise, the "Te Deum." But these moments of happiness were not of long duration; they were succeeded by others, of deep anxiety, as the remembrance of the perils yet to be encountered flashed upon our minds. We were approaching the "Columbia." The entrance into this river is difficult and dangerous, even for seamen provided with good charts; and our captain, unable to procure any, was, we know, entirely unacquainted with the rocks and breakers, which, at this season, render it almost impracticable.

We soon perceived Cape Disappointment, which seems to point out to travellers the course they are to pursue. It was growing late, and the captain resolved to steer out into the open sea, to avoid the danger of running aground during the night. As the vessel moved slowly onward, leaving the shore in the distance, we stood upon deck, contemplating from afar the high mountains and vast forests of Oregon. Here and there we could distinguish the clouds of smoke curling upwards from the huts of our poor Indians. This aspect filled my very soul with indescribable emotions. It would be necessary to be placed in the same position, to understand fully what were then our feelings. Our hearts palpitated with joy as we gazed on those boundless regions, over which were scattered so many abandoned souls—the young, the aged—dying in the shades of infidelity, for want of missionaries; an evil which we were about to alleviate, if not for all, at least for a great number.

The 29th all the fathers celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, wishing to offer a last violence to heaven, and force, as it were, a benediction on our mission. The morning was dark and gloomy: so were our spirits. About 10 o'clock the sky cleared, and allowed us to approach, with caution, the vast and fearful mouth of the

Columbia. We soon discovered immense breakers, several miles in extent—the infallible sign of a sand bank. The shoals crossed the river, and seemed to oppose an invincible barrier to our entrance. This sight filled us with consternation. We felt that to attempt a passage would be exposing ourselves to an almost certain death. What was to be done? What become of us? How extricate ourselves from so perilous a situation?

On the 30th our captain, from the topmast, caught the glimpse of a vessel, slowly rounding the Cape, on its way out of the river. This cheering sight was in a moment snatched from our eager view by an intervening rock, under the shade of which it cast anchor, to await a favourable wind. Its appearance, however, led us to conclude that the passage of the river was yet practicable, and we hoped to be directed by its course. About 3 o'clock the captain sent the lieutenant, with three sailors, to sound the breakers, and seek a favorable opening for our entrance on the morrow, which happened to be the 31st July, feast of the great "Loyola." This auspicious coincidence re-animated our hopes, and roused our drooping courage. Full of confidence in the powerful protection of our glorious founder, we prostrated ourselves, and fervently implored him not to abandon us in our extreme need. This duty accomplished, we hastened on deck, to await the return of the shallop. It was not until 11 o'clock that their little vessel came alongside the "Indefatigable." No one dared interrogate the sailors, for their dejected countenances foreboded discouraging tidings. However, the lieutenant assured the captain that he had found no obstacle, and that he had passed the bar the preceding night, at 11 o'clock, with five fathoms (30 feet) of water. Immediately were the sails unfurled, and the "Indefatigable" slowly resumed her majestic course under the favor of a rising breeze. The sky was serene, the sun shone with unwonted brilliancy. For a long time we had not beheld so lovely a day; nothing but the safe entrance into the river was wanting, to render this the *most beautiful* day of our voyage. As we approached, we re-doubled our prayers. All appeared recollected, and prepared for every event. Presently our wary captain gave orders to sound. A hardy sailor fastened himself to the side of the vessel, and lowered the plummet. Soon was head the cry, "Seven fathoms." At intervals the cry was repeated: "Six fathoms," "Five fathoms!" It may be imagined how our hearts palpitated at each reiteration. But when we heard the thrilling cry of "*Three fathoms*," all hope vanished. At one moment it was thought the vessel would be dashed against the reefs. The lieutenant said to the captain, "We are between life and death; but we must advance." The Lord had not resolved on our destruction, but He wished to test the faith of his servants. In a few moments the tidings of four fathoms roused our sinking spirits: we breathed once more, but the danger yet impended over us; we had still to sail two miles amidst these fearful breakers. A second time is heard the chilling cry of "Three fathoms!" "We have mistaken our route," exclaimed the lieutenant. "Bah!" exclaimed the captain, "do you not see that the Indefatigable passes over every thing? Keep on." Heaven was for us; otherwise, neither the skill of our captain, nor the sailors' activity, could have rescued us from inevitable death. We were amidst the southern channel, which no vessel had ever crossed. A few moments after we learned that our escape had been miraculous."

Our vessel had, at first, taken the right course for entering the river, but, not far from its mouth, the Columbia divides into two branches, forming, as it were, two channels. The northern, near Cape Disappointment, is the one we should have followed; the southern is not frequented, owing to the tremendous breakers that obstruct its entrance, over which we had passed, the first, and probably the last. We afterwards learned, that the deputy of Fort Astoria, having descried our vessel two days before, hastened, with some savages, to the extremity of the cape, and endeavored, by means of large fires, hoisting flags, and the firing of guns, to warn us of danger. We had, indeed, perceived these signals, but without suspecting they were intended for us. God, no doubt, wished to show us that he is sufficiently powerful to expose us to peril, and to withdraw us from it unharmed. Glory to His holy name! glory, also, to St. Ignatius, who so visibly protected his children on this, his festal day.

About 4½, a canoe approached us: it contained Clatsop Indians, commanded by an American resident of the coast. The whoop of these wild men of the forest much astonished our fathers, and the sisters of Notre Dame. The only word we could distinguish was "Catche," which they vociferated countless times. Our captain made them a sign to approach, and permitted them to came on board. The American immediately accosted me, and spoke of our perilous situation, saying, that he would have come to our aid, but his Indians refused to brave the danger. The Indians, on their side, endeavored by signs to make us comprehend how great had been their terror, for, at every moment, they expected to see our vessel dashed into a thousand pieces. They had wept for us, convinced, that without the intervention of the "Great Spirit," we could never have escaped the dangers. Verily, these brave savages were not mistaken. All who know the history of our passage affirm the same; they cease not to congratulate us on so miraculous an escape.

The second visit we received, was from some Tchinouks, a small tribe, inhabiting the immense forests of the northern shore. The Clatsops, whose number amounts to not more than one hundred and fifty men, occupy the southern shore. The Tchinouks inhabit three villages beyond the forest. The men wrap themselves in blankets when they appear before the "whites," and are excessively vain of their collars and ear-rings. Their disposition is extremely sociable, and we found it necessary to be on the reserve, to prevent their too great familiarity. They are content, provided they be not driven away, and they require no further attention paid them. They are of a peaceable temper, and, as their wants are easily supplied, they lead an inactive and indolent life. Fishing and the chase form their sole occupation. Game abounds in their forests, and their rivers are teeming with salmon. After providing for their daily wants, they spend entire hours motionless, basking in the sun; it is needless to add, they live in the most profound ignorance of religion. These are the Indians who have the custom of flattening their children's heads.

The following morning we perceived a small skiff making its way towards us. It belonged to Mr. Burney, the gentleman who, in our recent danger, had acted so friendly a part. He accosted us with the utmost kindness, and invited us to return with him to Fort Astoria, of which he is the Superintendant, that his wife and children might have the pleasure of seeing us. Persuaded, that after so tedious a voyage, the visit would be agreeable to all parties, I readily consented. Whilst this hospitable family were preparing dinner we made a little excursion into the neighboring forest. We were in admiration of the immense height and prodigious bulk of the fir trees, many of which were two hundred feet high, and four and a half in diameter. We beheld one which measured forty-two feet in circumference.

After a ramble of two hours, Mr. Burney reconducted us to the fort.

In a second promenade several of our company greatly admired the tombs of the savage. The deceased is placed in a sort of canoe, or hollow trunk of a tree; the body is then covered with mats or skins; and the savage entombing consists in thus suspending the corpse to the branches of trees, or exposing it on the banks of the river. In one place we saw about twelve of these sepulchres; they are ordinarily found in places of difficult access, the better to secure them from the rapine of wild beasts. Not far from this cemetery one of our fathers, more curious than the others, wandered a little distance into the woods; he speedily hastened back, apparently in a panic, saying that he had seen the *muzzle of a bear*, which did not look very tame.

I set out for Fort Vancouver the 2d August, wishing to reach there before my companions, that I might inform the Rev. Mr. Blanchet of our happy arrival. As to our fathers, the remainder of their voyage may be summed up in few words. On the 3d and 4th their vessel was almost stationary, for want of a favorable wind. At a glance, their three days' voyage might be measured. Towards evening a gentle breeze sprung up, and thus permitted them to pursue their course. In a few hours they passed the rocks, extending the distance of six leagues. They were then enabled to keep the centre of the river, where the numerous windings of the stream compelled them to make continual manœuvres.

In this place the river is most magnificent: the smooth polished surface of the waters—the rapid current, almost concealed from view by the contraction of its rocky bed—the sullen roaring of the waterfalls and cascades—produce upon the mind an effect of sublimity and grandeur not to be described. One is never weary admiring the richness, beauty, and variety of these solitary regions. The shores on either side are bordered by lofty forests, and crowned with thickly-wooded forests. It is more especially in the *forest* that the grand, the picturesque, the sublime, the beautiful, form the most singular and fantastic combinations. From the loftiest giants of the forest down to the humblest shrubs, *all* excite the spectator's astonishment. The parasites form a characteristic feature of these woodlands. They cling to the tree, climb it to a certain height, and then, letting their tops fall to the earth, again take root—again shoot up—push from branch to branch—from tree to tree, in every direction—until tangled, twisted, and knotted in every possible form, they festoon the whole forest with drapery in which a ground-work of the richest verdure is diversified with garlands of the most varied and many-colored flowers. In ascending the Columbia we meet, from time to time, with bays of considerable extent, interspersed with handsome little islands, which, thrown, as it were, like groups of flowers and verdure, present a charming spectacle. Here the painter should go to study his art—here would he find the loveliest scenery, the most varied and brilliant coloring. At every step the scene becomes more ravishing; the perspective more noble and majestic. In no other part of the world is nature so great a *coquette* as here.

At length, on the 5th August, the vessel arrived at Fort Vancouver, about 7 o'clock in the evening. The governor, an excellent and truly pious man, together with his lady, and the most respectable personages of the place, were assembled on the shore to receive us. As soon as the ship had cast anchor we landed, and hastened to the fort, where we were received and treated with all possible cordiality. Here we were obliged to tarry eight days, for the Rev. Mr. Blanchet, who did not arrive till the 12th, not having received my letter, informing him of our arrival. No sooner was he aware of it than he hastened to join us, bringing with him a considerable number of parishioners. He had travelled the entire night and day, and we were delighted to meet this indefatigable clergyman. Though so comfortably situated at the fort, yet we were anxious to arrive as soon as possible at the place destined us by Divine Providence. The pious religious likewise sighed after their convent home of Willamette. Monsieur Blanchet accordingly made the necessary arrangement for our departure, and we left Fort Vancouver on the 14th.

An affecting adieu awaited us. Our worthy captain stood upon the shore. The emotion was sensibly felt by each one of us. For eight months we had shared the same dangers, and so often stood together, gazing in the very face of death: could we then restrain the parting tear, which seemed to gush from the fountain of the heart, as we remembered his kindness.

Our little squadron consisted of four canoes, manned by the parishioners of Mr. Blanchet, and our own sloop. We sailed up the river, and soon entered the Willamette, whose waters flow into the Columbia.

As night approached we moored our vessels and encamped upon the shore. There, grouped around the fire, we partook of our evening meal. The night was calm and serene—all nature was hushed in profound silence—all invited us to repose; but the swarms of musquetoes with which these woods abound, prevented our slumber. The religious, to whom we had yielded the tent, suffered equally with those who had nothing but the star-spangled canopy of heaven above them. You will not, consequently, be surprised, that the night appeared somewhat long, and that the morning's dawn found us on foot. It was the festival of the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God, which, in these regions, is usually solemnized on the following Sunday. Aided by the religious, I erected a small altar. Mr. Blanchet offered the Holy Sacrifice, at which all communicated.

Finally, the 17th, about 11 o'clock, we came in sight of our dear mission of Willamette. Mr. Blanchet charged himself with the transportation of our baggage. A cart was procured to conduct the religious to their dwelling, which is about five miles from the river. In two hours we were all assembled in the chapel of Willamette, to adore and thank our Divine Saviour, by the solemn chanting of the Te Deum, in which all hearts and lips joined with lively emotion.

Early in the morning of Sunday, the 18th, the day on which the Assumption is celebrated here, we saw the Canadian cavaliers arriving in crowds with their wives and children, whom they had brought from great distances, to assist at the solemn services of the church.

At 9 o'clock all were arranged in perfect order in the church; the men on one side, the women on the other. The Rev. Mr. Blanchet celebrated the August Sacrifice, assisted by twenty acolytes. The piety of his parishioners contributed much to our edification.

On arriving at the mission of St. Paul, of Willamette, we proceeded at once to the residence of the Very Rev. Mr. Blanchet, who received us with the greatest kindness, and immediately placed at our disposal everything on

the place. My first care was, to se
convenient locality where, according to
of our Very Rev. Father General, a mot
sion could be established. For this p
made several unsuccessful excursions
adjacent country. The most eligible s
were already occupied. The Methoc
deed, offered to sell me their Academy,
a sufficiently large and handsome ho
entirely destitute of wood and arable l
this perplexity Mr. Blanchet relieved
generous and disinterested offer. He
to examine the property belonging to
sion, and take such portions of it as
judge most proper for our projected e
ment. * We accordingly set out on this
cursion; but we had scarcely procee
miles when we came to a point unitin
desirable advantage. Picture to you
immense plain extending as far as
can reach; on one side the snowy cres
gigantic Hood, Jefferson, and St. Hel
three highest peaks of Oregon), towe
jestically upwards, and losing themselv
clouds; on the east a long range of dist
their blue-tinged summits melting, as
into the deep azure of the sky; on the

limpid waters of two small lakes, on whose beautiful shores the beaver, the otter, and the musk-rat, sport in careless security, heedless of our presence. The elevation on which we were standing, gradually sloping downward, and forming a charming amphitheatre, extended to the borders of one of the lakes. I hesitated not a moment in selecting this spot for the mother mission. The sweet recollections of our first establishment on the Missouri returned to my mind; and the remembrance of the rapid progress of the Mission of St. Stanislaus, near St. Ferdinand, whose branches now extend over the greater part of Missouri, Ohio, Louisiana, reaching even the Rocky Mountains, and penetrating to the eastern boundary of America, led me to breathe a fervent prayer, that here, also, might be formed a station, whence the torch of faith would diffuse its cheering light among the benighted tribes of this immense [illegible]. We have also a fine view of the [illegible] River, which, in this [illegible] bend, [illegible] its course [illegible] which presents an almost inexhaustible supply of materials for the construction of our [illegible]. In no part of this [illegible] with a more luxuriant [illegible] oak, buttonball, and yew trees. The intervening country is beautifully diversified with shadowy groves and smiling plains, whose rich soil yields abundant harvests, sufficient for the maintenance of a large establishment. Besides these advantages, there are a number of springs on one side of the hill, one of which is not more than 100 feet from the house, and it will probably be of great use hereafter. Having now made choice of the locality, we commenced without delay the erection of the buildings. The first thing to be done was to clear the ground by cutting away the under-brush and isolated trees, after which, with the aid of the inhabitants, we constructed three wooden buildings, covered by a single roof of 90 feet; these were to serve as workshops for the brother blacksmith, carpenter, etc.

Besides these, a house, 45 by 85 feet, is now under way. It is to be two stories, and will be the dwelling house of the missionaries.

We arrived in the Oregon Territory during the prevalence of a disease (bloody flux) which was considered contagious, though the physicians attributed it to the [illegible] tion of [illegible] water. [illegible] [illegible] to it [illegible] the [illegible] cooks, and the Indians of the Cascades, large parties of whom encamped along the banks of the river, on their way to Vancouver, to obtain the aid of a physician. Those who could not proceed were abandoned by their friends; and it was truly painful to see these poor creatures stretched out, and expiring on the sand. The greater part of our sailors, and three of the sisters, were attacked by the pestilence; the Rev. Father Accolti also experienced its terrible effects; for myself, I was obliged to keep my bed during 15 long days, and to observe a rigorous diet. But the captain of our vessel was the greatest sufferer. The disease attacked him so violently, that I seriously fear he will never again return to the cherished family—the affectionate wife and children of whom he used daily to speak with so much tenderness. He was a worthy man—an experienced and skilful [illegible]; I esteemed him highly, although I could not forbear blaming him for the little [illegible] had shown in repressing the profane language of one of the passengers, who, from the time of his embarkation until we landed him at Fort Vancouver, had [illegible] to offend [illegible] by his horrid [illegible] Almighty has pronounced his curse against the blasphemer!

and sooner or later it will fall upon him. Poor "Indefatigable," I tremble for thy fate.

The winter was rapidly approaching, and, notwithstanding my weak state, I could not resist my pressing desire to visit, once more, my dear Indians of the mountains, who, on their side, await my return with the greatest impatience, as I was informed by the Rev. F. Mengarini, who had come to meet me. To-day I shall have the happiness to set out for the Rocky Mountains.

I am, &c.,

P. J. DE SMET.

P. S.—On the 9th September the good sisters commenced instructing the women and children, who were preparing for their first communion. As their house was not yet habitable, they were obliged to give their instructions in the open air. In three days' time they had already 19 pupils, from 16 to 60 years of age, all of whom came from a distance, bringing with them provisions for several days, and sleeping in the woods, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. It is easy to conceive by this how eager [illegible] poor people are for instruction. Each [illegible] sisters devote six hours to teaching them the usual prayers, and manner of making the sign of the cross. On one occasion, it was discovered that a woman had remained two days without food; the dogs had devoured her little provision, and, lest she should miss the instruction, she was unwilling to go home for another supply.

24th.—The convent having as yet neither doors nor sashes, owing to the scarcity of mechanics, some of these good Sisters were seen endeavoring to handle the plane, others glazing, painting the windows and doors, &c. They were the more ardently desirous for the completion of their new habitation, as already thirty Canadian pupils had been offered them; and thus would they be enabled to procure the means of giving a gratuitous support and protection to the hapless orphans of the forests. These poor children, rescued from their destitute condition, and placed under the benign care of the kind Sisters, would enjoy the blessings of a Christian education, and become, one day, cooperators in the mission. But, to effect this, and to realize the cheering hopes it holds forth, funds must be raised to provide the necessary clothing for the orphans, as the profits arising from the school will not be more than sufficient to defray the expenses of their board. I here give you the [illegible] prospectus of their Academy. Per quarter, 100lbs flour, 25lbs pork, or 36 of beef, 1 sack [illegible], 4lbs hogs' lard, 3 gallons peas, 3 doz. eggs, 1 gallon salt, 4lbs candles, 1lb tea, 4lbs rice.

The Sisters took possession of their convent in the month of October; a few days after, their chapel was solemnly consecrated by the Rev. Mr. Blanchet; and they have since enjoyed the happiness of assisting every day at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, offered up at their simple altar by one of the missionaries, stationed at St. Francis Xavier. They have also twice had the consolation of presenting at the table of the Lord the little band of fervent neophytes, whom they had prepared with so much care, for this solemn action. This success, in so short a time, has induced us to conceive the project of founding another house of this order in the village of Cahute. Monsieur Blanchet and Father De Vos think, that the departure of the Protestant ministers, on account of their fruitless labors, renders this an auspicious moment for the establishment of a religious house. The station of Willamette would furnish occupation sufficient for twelve Sisters, but unfortunately they are but six in number.

We learn with pleasure that it is the intention of Monseigneur Blanchet to visit Europe immediately after his consecration, in order to obtain, if possible, twelve more of these zealous and devoted religious, for the mission. God grant he may succeed; and that the want of pecuniary means may not oppose an insurmountable obstacle to the generous sacrifice, which, we are all well-assured, the pious Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame are disposed to make again in our behalf.

No. III.

A. M. D. G.

At the Foot of the Great Glaciers, one of the Upper
Sources of the Athabasca River, May, 6th, 1846.

MONSEIGNEUR,—I am late, but not forgetful of my duty and promises, for I will remember the many obligations I have contracted, and the happy hours I passed, when travelling in your paternity's company. I now come to redeem them, by troubling you with a dozen Rocky Mountain letters, including a narrative of my last year's excursions and missions among several Indian tribes; of what I have seen and heard; and of what happened, as I was travelling along. I hope my letters may be consoling to you, and serve as a proof that the work of God is progressing among the long-benighted children of the Oregon desert, and among the lonely tribes on the northern waters of the great Mackenzie River. Four priests from Red River will soon find ample employment in the dreary regions of the Hudson Bay Territory. How lamentable it is, that the great western desert alone, extending from the States to the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains, and south to the Mexican lines, should be lying waste. This would, indeed, present an extensive field to the zeal of Catholic missionaries; and, from my personal observations, and those of all the priests who have passed this desert, their efforts would be crowned with the greatest success. Indians are, in general, carelessly judged and little known in the civilized world; people will form their opinions from what they see among the Indians* on the frontiers, where the "fire water," and all the degrading vices of the whites have caused the greatest havoc. The farther one penetrates into the desert the better he finds the aborigines; and, in general, I found them most willing and anxious to receive religious instruction, and to hear the good tidings of salvation.

A bishop, and two or three priests, who would make it their business to visit the different tribes of this vast land, remaining among each of the tribes a reasonable and sufficient time to instruct the Indians, would most certainly meet with the most abundant harvest; the scalping-knife might thus soon be laid aside, and where the Indian war-whoop has for centuries resounded, might be heard in its [illegible] the canticles and praises of the true and only living God. The idea of collecting and settling these wandering nations, would, in my humble opinion, be impossible, or, at least, a very slow work. The Indians might be made good Christians, and still continue, at the same time, to lead a hunter's life, as long as buffalo and deer will supply their wants.

Nothing, but the interest I feel for these poor people, and the assurance I have that they will find a patron and friend in your paternity, make me bold enough to make an appeal to you in [illegible] favor, so that a speedy remedy may be [illegible] to the existing and most distressing wants of this large district of the United States. Thousands of whites are well cared for and are straying from the true path—the Indians have likewise souls to be saved, redeemed by the Saviour's precious blood, and thousands of these bereft children are most anxious to enjoy the salutary blessings with which their white brethren are favored.

I remain, with the greatest esteem and respect, recommending myself at the same time to your holy sacrifices and prayers.

[illegible] very humble and obedient servant in

P. I. DE SMET, S. J.

No. IV.

A. M. D. G.

St. Francis Xavier, Willamette,
June [illegible], 1845.

Right Rev. Bishop,

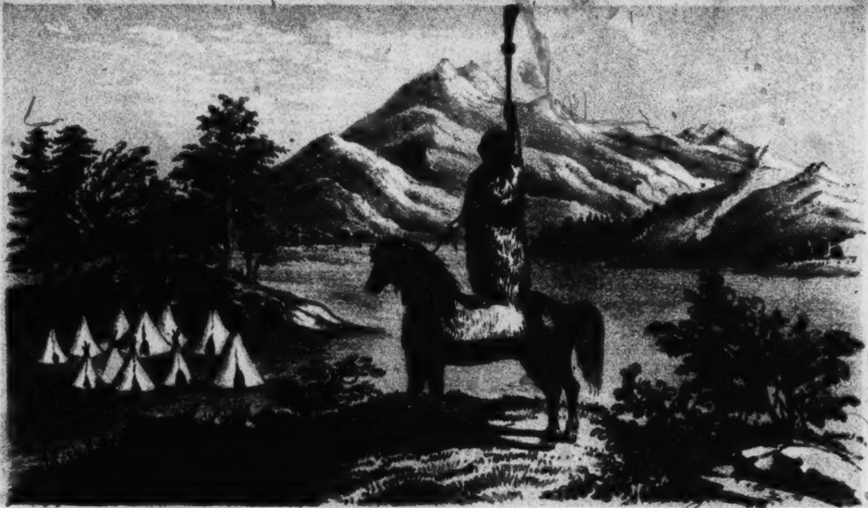
Sir,—In the beginning of February, I set out to visit our different settlements and stations, and to form new ones among the neighboring tribes of our reductions. The entire surface of this region was then covered with snow, five feet deep; and I was compelled to go from the Bay of Pends-d'oreilles to the Horse Plain, in a bark canoe, a distance of 250 miles.

I was among my dear *Flatheads* and *Pends-d'oreilles* (ear-rings) of the mountains, during the Paschal time, and had the great consolation of finding them replete with zeal and fervor in fulfilling the duties of true children of prayer. The solemn feast of Easter, all the *Flatheads* at St. Mary's devoutly approached the most blessed sacrament during my mass; and about three hundred *Pends-d'oreilles*, (the [illegible] [illegible] adults), belonging to the station of St. [illegible]

Borgia, presented themselves at the baptismal font. Five chiefs were among the number; the most distinguished are *Stiettiedloodsho*, or chieftain of the Tribe Valiant; *Selpisto*, the head chieftain, and *Chalax*, that is to say the *White Robe*, surnamed the Juggler or great medicine man. The word *medicine man*, in their language, is synonymous with juggler.

How consoling it is to pour the regenerating waters of baptism on the furrowed and scarified brows of these desert warriors,—to behold these children of the plains and forests emerging from that profound ignorance and superstition in which they have been for so many ages deeply and darkly enveloped; to see them embrace the faith and all its sacred practices, with an eagerness, an attention, a zeal, worthy the pristine Christians.

Were I to give you the history of these chiefs, I should greatly exceed the limits I have proposed. Suffice it to say, that these heroes of the Rocky Mountains have been for years the terror of their enemies. Chalax had acquired great celebrity *as a juggler*, and in predicting future events; if we may credit the *Kalispels* and the whites who have travelled in company with him, these prophecies have been verified.



ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DISCOVERY OF BUFFALOS. (See Letter 2d)

He indicated the day, the place, and the number of *Blackfeet* who would attack their camp. Having interrogated him relative to this affair, he, with great simplicity and candor, replied: "I am called the Great Doctor, yet, never have I given myself up to the practices of juggling, nor condescended to exercise its deceptions. I derive all my strength from prayer; when in a hostile country, I address myself to the Master of life, and offer Him my heart and soul, entreating him to protect us against our enemies. A voice had already warned me of coming danger; I then recommend prudence and vigilance throughout the camp; for the monitory voice has never deceived me. I have now a favor to request: the mysterious voice calls me by the name of *Chalax*, and, if you will permit, I desire to bear that name until my death." I willingly consented, and then explained to him the ceremony of the *White Garment* he was about to receive, in the holy sacrament of baptism. To the name of *Chalax* I affixed that of the Prince of the Apostles. This is the same chief, who on my first visit to the mountains, aided by only sixty men, sustained during five days, an obstinate struggle against 200 lodges of *Blackfeet*, whom he put to flight, leaving on the ground eighty men, whilst among the *Flatheads* only one man was wounded. He died three months after.

With regret I parted from these good Indians, and my beloved brothers in Jesus Christ, the Rev. Fathers Mengarini, Zerbinati, and four coadjutor brothers; who are laboring with indefatigable zeal in this portion of our Lord's vineyard.

As the snow was fast disappearing, the Kalispels of the bay were awaiting my arrival. I re-entered my fragile canoe, guided by two Indians, and made all possible haste to descend Clarke's River. You may judge of its impetuosity when I inform you, that we were sixteen days ascending the river, and but four in descending the same. On returning to the bay, accompanied by Rev. Father Hocken and several chiefs, my first care was to examine the lands belonging to this portion of the Tribe of Kalispels, and select a fit site for erecting the new establishment of St. Ignatius. We found a vast and beautiful prairie, three miles in extent, surrounded by cedar and pine, in the neighborhood of the cavern of New Manrese, and its quarries, and a fall of water more than two hundred feet, presenting every advantage for the erection of mills. I felled the first tree, and after having taken all necessary measures to expedite the work, I departed for Walla Walla, where I embarked in a small boat and descended the Columbia, as far as Fort Vancouver. The melting of the snow had occasioned a considerable freshet, and our descent was very rapid. The place was indicated [illegible] me where a few months previously, four [illegible]lers from the United States had miserably [illegible]ished, victims of their own temerity and presumption. When advised to provide the[illegible] with a guide, they answered they had n[illegible] of any; and when warned that the river [illegible] dangerous and deceptive, the pilot, with a scoffing boast, replied, "I am capable of guiding my barge, were it even across the infernal gulf." The monitor wished them a fortunate voyage, but at the same time trembled for their fate, saying: "This pilot is not a native Indian, he is not an Iroquois, nor even a Canadian." The turbulent stream soon engulfed its presumptuous and daring victims. They steered out into the midst of the river, and in an instant the canoe was borne along with the rapidity of lightning, leaving in its train a thick foam, caused by the violent plying of oars. Approaching the rapids, they fearlessly hurried onward—alas, their fate was soon to be decided. Drawn by the eddy into the centre of a whirlpool, vainly they struggled to extricate themselves—they beheld the dread abyss yawning to receive its prey! Yet, an instant, the ill-fated barge twirled upon the surface, and then sank, amidst the despairing shrieks of the helpless crew, which the roaring waves rendered the more appalling, whilst the dismal sounds re-echoing from shore to shore, proclaimed the new disaster of the "Columbia." Soon the waters resumed their wonted course, and left no trace of the sad catastrophe. This fatal spot might appropriately be designated, Presumptive's Rapids; doubtless, it will be a lesson to future boasters, not to venture, without pilot or guide, upon this formidable tributary of the western ocean.

After a prosperous voyage of five days, I debarked at Vancouver, where I had the happiness of meeting Father Nobili, who, during eight months, had applied himself to study the Indian language, while he exercised his sacred ministry among the Catholics of the fort and the Indians of the neighborhood. More than a tenth of the latter had been swept off by a mortal disease; happily, they all had the consolation of receiving baptism before they expired.

Father Nobili accompanied me in a Tchinouk canoe, up the beautiful River of Multonomah or Willamette, a distance of about sixty miles, as far as the village of Champois, three miles from our residence of St. Francis Xavier. On our arrival all the fathers came to meet us, and great was our delight in being again reunited after a long winter season. The Italian fathers had applied themselves chiefly to the study of languages. Father Ravalli, being skilled in medicine, rendered considerable services to the inhabitants of St. Paul's Mission; for every dwelling contained several sick. Father Vercruysse, at the request of Right. Rev. Bishop Blanchet, opened a mission among the Canadians who were distant from St. Paul's, and he succeeded in causing them to contribute to the erection of a new church, in a central location. Father De Vos is the only one of our fathers of Willamette who speaks English. He devotes his whole attention to the Americans, whose number already exceeds 4,000. There are several Catholic families, and our dissenting brethren seem well disposed; many among them are eager to be instructed in the Catholic faith.

Nowhere does religion make greater progress, or present brighter prospects for the future, than in Oregon Territory. The Very Rev. Mr. Demers, Vicar General and Administrator of the diocess in the absence of the bishop, is preparing to build a brick cathedral. There is now being built, under his superintendence, a fine church at the Falls of Willamette, where, three years ago, was commenced the first town of Oregon. This rising village numbers more than 100 houses. Several lots have been selected for a convent and two schools. A Catholic church has been erected at Vancouver.

The Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame is fast progressing, and it will be the finest building of Willamette. The church is eighty feet long, and proportionably wide; it is under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin. The religious have already fifty boarders. The Bishop's College, under the management of the Very Rev. Mr. Bolduc, is very prosperous. The number of pupils has augmented; forty young men, chiefly *Metis*, are receiving a Christian education. Some years ago, a church was erected at Cowlitz, and the inhabitants are now preparing to construct a convent under the direction of Rev. Mr. Langlois.

Our residence of St. Francis Xavier is completed; it will hereafter serve for a novitiate and seminary, to prepare young men for the missions.

Measures, which I trust will be realized, have been taken by our fathers for visiting, during this year, the numerous tribes inhabiting the Pacific coast north and south of the Columbia; where, already, the visits of the bishop and his grand vicar have been so productive of favorable results. The 17th Feb., 1842, Bishop Blanchet thus wrote to the Bishop of Quebec: "God has deigned to bless our labors, and to fructify the divine word. The adorable name of Jesus has been announced to new nations of the north. Mr. Demers bent his steps to Fort Langley on Frazer's River, in which place he administered baptism to upwards of 700 children. Many of them already enjoy the precious fruits of regenerating grace.

In my preceding letters, I gave you the details of our missions among the mountains of the higher Oregon; of the conversion of two tribes, the *Flatheads* and the *Cœurs-d'Alène* or *Pointed Hearts*; of the first communion of the latter, and conversion of several *Kalispels* of the Bay, on the solemn festival of Christmas. From

1839, when the mission was established, to July, 1845, the reverend Canadian missionaries baptized 3,000 persons. The number of Catholics residing at the different stations of the Hon. Hudson Bay Co. in Oregon, together with the colonists of the same nation, amounts to several hundreds. By adding to these 2857 baptized since 1841 in the different mountain missions, it gives us a total of more than 6,000 Catholics in Oregon. The diminutive grain of mustard is fast extending far and wide its branches, over this once sterile and neglected region. In the month of June, Father Nobili, accompanied by a brother novice, left Willamette to visit the tribes of New Caledonia. The Very Rev. Mr. Demers saw the following named tribes: *Kameloups*, the *Atnans* or *Shouwapemot*, the *Porteurs* or *Ltavten*, which names vary according to the different places where the tents are pitched. They affix the word ten which signifies people, i. e., *Stelaoten*, *Nashkoten*, *Tchilkoten*, *Nazeteoten*. Rev. Mr. Demers had the consolation of baptizing 436 children among these tribes.

Such has since been the fervor and zeal of these poor Indians; who, though deprived of a priest, have built three churches, hoping that a nepapayattok, or father would settle among them.

Many Catholics reside in the different forts of this country. The honorable gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Co., although Protestants, were strongly interested in favor of these savages, and did all in their power to facilitate the introduction of a clergyman into this portion of their jurisdiction.

I have the honor to be, with the most profound respect and esteem, Monseigneur, your most humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ.

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. V.

A. M. D. G.

Kalispel Bay, Aug. 7th, 1845.

MONSEIGNEUR,—A few days after the departure of Father Nobili, who obtained a place in a barge belonging to the Hon. Hudson Bay Co., I started from St. Francis Xavier's with eleven horses laden with ploughs, spades, pickaxes, scythes, and carpenters' implements. My companions were the good Brother McGil, and two metis or mongrels. We encountered many obstacles and difficulties among the mountains, owing to the cascades formed by the water, which, at this season, descends on every side in torrents, and with irresistible fury upon the rocks, over which we were compelled to cross. In the narrow valleys between these mountains, the rhododendron displays all its strength and beauty; it rises to the height of fifteen or twenty feet. Entire groves are formed by thousands of these shrubs, whose clustering branches entwine themselves in beautiful green arches, adorned with innumerable bouquets of splendid flowers, varying their hues from the pure white, to the deepened tint of the crimsoned rose.

Our path was strewed with the whitened bones of horses and oxen, melancholy testimonies of the miseries endured by other travellers through these regions. We passed the foot of Mt. Hood, the most elevated of this stupendous chain. It is covered with snow, and rises 16,000 feet above the level of the sea. Capt. Wyeth, on beholding this ridge from the summit of the Blue Mountains, thus speaks of it in his journal :—"The traveller on advancing westerly, even at the distance of 160 miles, beholds the peaks of the Cascade Mountains. Several of them rise 16,000 feet above the level of the sea. Every other natural wonder seems to dwindle, as it were, into insignificance when compared to this." From one single spot I contemplated seven of these majestic summits extending from north to south, whose dazzling white and conic form resemble a sugar loaf.

We were twenty days going from Willamette to Walla Walla, across desert and undulating lands, abounding in absinthium or wormwood, cactus, tufted grass, and several species of such plants and herbs as are chiefly found in a sterile and sandy soil.

Game is scarce in these latitudes; however, we found large partridges and pheasants, aquatic fowls, small birds of various kinds, hares and rabbits. Salamanders swarm in sandy places, and armadilloes are not rare in the vicinity of the great Dalles. Fort Walla Walla is situated in latitude 46° 2′, and longitude 119° 30′. The sandy neighborhood of this settlement likens it to a little Arabia. The River Walla Walla pours its waters a mile distant from the fort. The lowlands, when watered, are tolerably fertile, and produce maize, wheat, potatoes, and pulse of every kind. Cows and hogs are easily raised, and horses abound in this part of the country.

Having already spoken to you of the desert Nez-Percé and Spokane, I have nothing further to add relative to this dreary region. On advancing easterly towards the Blue Mountains, we find beautiful and fertile plains, interspersed with limpid and wholesome streams. The valleys are picturesque, covered with luxuriant prairies, and forests of pine and fir. The *Nez-Percé Kayuses* inhabit these delightful pastures. They are the most wealthy tribes in Oregon;

even some private families possess 1500 horses. The savages successfully cultivate potatoes, pease, corn, and several kinds of vegetables and fruits. No situation affords finer grazing for cattle; even in winter they find an abundance, nor do they need shelter from the inclemency of the weather. Snow is never seen, and the rains are neither destructive nor superabundant.

About the middle of July, I arrived safely with all my effects, at the Bay of Kalispels. In my absence the number of neophytes had considerably increased. On the feast of the Ascension, Father Hocken had the happiness of baptizing more than one hundred adults. Since my departure in the spring, our little colony has built four houses, prepared materials for constructing a small church, and enclosed a field of 300 acres. More than four hundred *Kalispels*, computing adults and children have been baptized. They are all animated with fervor and zeal; they make use of the hatchet and plough, being resolved to abandon an itinerant life for a permanent abode. The beautiful falls of the Columbia, called the Chaudières, in the vicinity of Fort Colville, are distant two days' journey from our new residence of St. Ignatius.

From eight to nine hundred savages were

there assembled for the salmon fishery. I re[illegible]ed thither in time to spend with them the [illegible] days preceding the feast of our holy founder. Within the last four years, considerable numbers of these Indians were visited by the "black-gowns," who administered the sacrament of baptism. I was received by my dear Indians with filial joy and tenderness. I caused my little chapel of boughs to be placed on an eminence in the midst of the Indians' huts, where it might not inaptly be compared to the pelican of the wilderness surrounded by her young, seeking with avidity the divine word, and sheltering themselves under the protection of their fostering mother. I gave three instructions daily; the Indians assisted at them with great assiduity and attention.

Last year, the feast of St. Ignatius proved for me a day of danger, trial, and uneasiness. I love to recall it to my mind, for it terminated joyfully, and so gloriously, that I know my companions can never forget it, and they will return lasting thanks to the Almighty, for the display of His mercy. Without a chart or any knowledge of the mouth of the Columbia, we traversed, as if borne on angels' wings, this formidable river. This year, I passed the feast of St. Ignatius amidst many occupations, but they were of such a nature as to console the missionary's heart, and repay him a hundred-fold, for the trifling privations, pains, and fatigues he endures.

More than one hundred children were presented for baptism, and eleven old men borne to me on skins, seemed only awaiting the regenerating waters, to depart home and repose in the bosom of their divine Saviour. The eldest among them, apparently about one hundred, and blind, addressed me in the following pathetic words:—My life has been long on earth, and my tears have not ceased to flow; even now I daily weep, for I have beheld all my children and early associates disappear. I find myself isolated among my own nation, as if I were in a stranger land, thoughts of the past alone occupy me, and they are of a mournful and bitter nature. Sometimes I find consolation in remembering that I have avoided the company of the wicked. Never have I shared in their thefts, battles or murders. This blessed day, joy has penetrated the inmost recesses of my soul; the Great Spirit has taken pity on me, I have received baptism, I return him thanks for this favor, and offer him my heart and life.

A solemn mass was celebrated, during which the Indians chanted canticles in praise of God. The ceremonies of baptism followed, and all terminated in the most perfect order, to the great delight and gratification of the savages. It was indeed a most imposing spectacle, all around contributed to heighten the effect. The noble, and gigantic rock, the distant roar of the cataracts breaking in on the religious silence of that solitude, situated on an eminence overlooking the powerful Oregon River, and on the spot where the impetuous waters freeing themselves from their limits, rush in fury, and dash over a pile of rocks, casting upwards a thousand jets d'eau, whose transparent columns reflect, in varied colors, the rays of the dazzling sun.

There were besides the *Shuyelphi* or *Chaudière* Indians, the *Sinpoils* the *Zingomenes* and several *Kalispels*, accompanied me in the capacity of singers and catechists.

I gave the name of St. Paul to the *Shuyelphi* nation, and placed under the care of St. Peter the tribe inhabiting the shores of the great Columbia lakes, whither Father Hocken is about to repair, to continue instructing and baptizing their adults. My presence among the Indians did not interrupt their fine and abundant fishery. An enormous basket was fastened to a projecting rock, and the finest fish of the Columbia, as if by fascination, cast themselves by dozens into the snare. Seven or eight times during the day, these baskets were examined, and each time were found to contain about 250 salmon. The Indians, meanwhile, were seen on every projecting rock, piercing the fish with the greatest dexterity.

They who know not this territory may accuse me of exaggeration, when I affirm, that it would be as easy to count the pebbles so profusely scattered on the shores, as to sum up the number of different kinds of fish, which this western river furnishes for man's support; as the buffalo of the north, and deer from north to east of the mountains, furnish daily food for the inhabitants of those regions, so do these fish supply the wants of the western tribes. One may form some idea of the quantity of salmon and other fish, by remarking, that at [illegible] they ascend the rivers, all the tribes inhabiting [illegible], choose a favorable location, and not only do they find abundant nourishment during the season, but, if diligent, [illegible] and also [illegible] of a sufficient quantity for the rest of the year. Innumerable shoals of salmon ascend to the river's source, and there die in shallow water. Great quantities of trout and carp follow them, and regale themselves on the spawn deposited by the salmon in holes and still water. The following spring the young salmon descend towards the sea, and I have been told, (I cannot vouch for the authenticity,) that they never return until the fourth year. Six different species are found in the Columbia River.

I left Chaudiere or Kettle Falls, August 4th, accompanied by several of the nation of the *Crees* to examine the lands they have selected for the site of a village. The ground is rich and well suited for all agricultural purposes. Several buildings were commenced; I gave the name of St. Francis Regis to this new station, where a great number of the mixed race and beaver hunters have resolved to settle, with their families. The 6th I traversed the high mountains of the *Kalispels*, and towards evening reached the establishment of St. Ignatius. The Rev. Fathers Hoeken and Ravalli, with two lay brothers, superintend this interesting little settlement. These fathers likewise visit the different neighboring tribes, such as the *Zingomenes*, *[illegible]*, *[illegible]*, the stations of St. Francis

Regis, of St. Peter, and that of St. Paul, the *Flatbows*, and the *Koetenays*. I purpose visiting these two tribes, who have never [illegible] consolation of beholding a "black [illegible] among them. All these tribes comprehend, on an average, about five hundred souls.

I am, with profound respect and esteem,
Your lordship's most obedient servant,
P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. VI.

A. M. D. G.

Station of the Assumption, Arcs-a-plats,
August 17th, 1845.

MONSEIGNEUR,—The 9th of August I continued my route towards the country of the *Arcs-a-plats.* The roads were still inundated by the great freshet. I preferred ascending the Clark or Flathead River, in my bark canoe, and sent my horses across the forests bordering the river, to await me at the great lake of the *Kalispels.* I had here a very agreeable and unexpected interview; as we approached the forests, several horsemen issued forth in tattered garments. The foremost gentleman saluted me by name, with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. I returned the gracious salutation, desiring to know whom I had the honor of addressing. A small river separated us, and, with a smile, he said, "Wait until I reach the opposite shore, and then you [illegible] recognise me." He is not a beaver hunter, said I to myself; yet under this tattered garb and slouched hat, I could easily descry one of the principal members of the Hon. Hudson Bay Co., the worthy and respectable Mr. Ogden. I had the honor and good fortune of making a voyage with him, and in his own barge, from Colville to Fort Vancouver, in [illegible] and no one could desire more agreeable society. [illegible] would be necessary for you to traverse the desert, to feel yourself insulated, remote from brethren, friends, to conceive the consolation and joy of such an rencounter.

Mr. Ogden left England in the month of April last, accompanied by two distinguished officers. It was a source of great pleasure to receive recent news from Europe. The Oregon question appeared to me somewhat alarming. It was neither curiosity nor pleasure that induced these two officers to cross these desolate regions, and hasten their course towards the mouth of the Columbia. They were intrusted with orders from their government to take possession of "Cape Disappointment," to unfurl the English standard, and erect a fortress for the purpose of securing the entrance of the river, in case of war. In the Oregon question, "John Bull," without much talk, attains his [illegible] and possesses the most important part of the country, whereas "Uncle Sam," displodes a volley of words, inveighs and storms! Many years have been passed in debates and useless contention, without one single practical *effort* to secure his real or pretended rights. The poor Indians of Oregon, who alone have a right to the country, are not consulted. Their future destiny will be, undoubtedly, like that of so many other unfortunate tribes, who, after having lived peaceably by hunting and fishing, during several generations, will finally disappear, victims of vice and malady, under the rapacious influence of modern civilization.

The route from the great *Kalispel* lake to the *Arcs-a-plats*, or Flatbow country, is across dense forests, and much obstructed by fallen trees, morasses, frightful sloughs, from which the poor horses with much difficulty extricate themselves; but, having finally surmounted all these obstacles, we contemplate from an eminence a smiling and accessible valley, whose mellow and abundant verdure is nourished by two lovely lakes, where the graceful river of the *Arcs-a-plats* or McGilvray, winds in such fantastic beauty, that it serves to make the weary traveller not only forget his past dangers, but amply compensates him for the fatigues of a long and tiresome journey.

This section of the valley of *Arcs-a-plats* greatly resembles the two valleys of the *Pointed Hearts*; same fertility of soil, lakes, pastures, willow and pine groves; elevated mountains covered to the very summit with dense forests of trees, low lands, in which the towering cedar displays all its majesty and splendid foliage; and, as Racine says:—

> " Elevent aux cieux
> Leurs fronts audacieux!"

The river is, in this place, deep and tranquil; moving along with a tardy pace until aroused from its inertness by the universal thaw; it then descends with such astounding impetuosity that it destroys the banks, and in its furious course, uproots and bears along trees, fragments of rocks, &c., which vainly oppose its passage. In a few days the entire valley is overflowed, and it presents to view immense lakes and morasses, separated by borders of trees. Thus does the kind providence of God, assist his poor creatures who inhabit these regions, by the liberality with which he ministers to their wants.

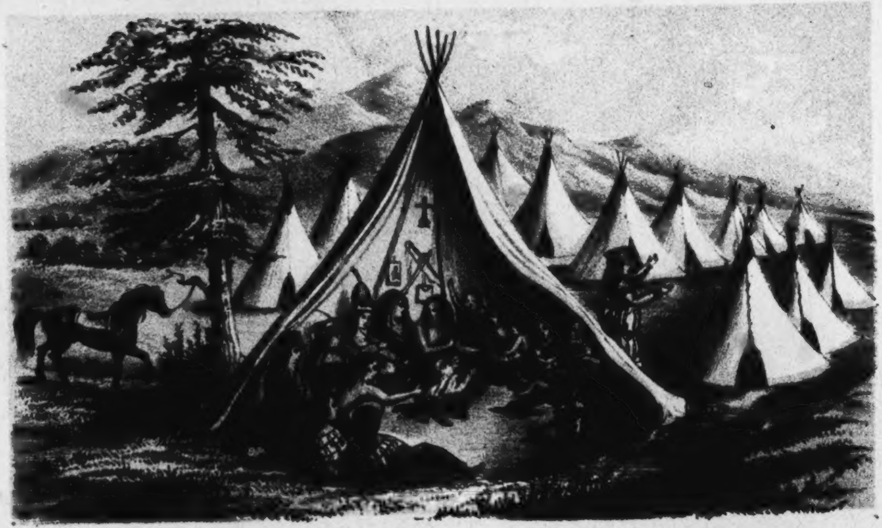
These lakes and morasses, formed in the spring, are filled with fish; they [illegible] inclosed as in natural reservoirs, [illegible] of the inhabitants. The fish swarm in such abundance that the Indians have no other labor than to take them from the water and prepare them for the kettle. Such an existence is, however, precarious; the savages, who are not of a provident nature, are obliged to go afterwards in quest of roots, grain, berries and fruits; such as the thorny bush which bears a sweet, pleasant, blackberry; the rose-buds, mountain cherry, [illegible] or service berry, various sorts of gooseberries and currants of excellent flavor; raspberries, the hawthorn berry, the wappato, (sagittæfolia,) a very nourishing, bulbous root; the bitter root, whose appellation sufficiently denotes its peculiar quality, is, however, very healthy; it grows in light, dry, sandy soil, as also the chious or biscuit root. The former is of a thin and cylindrical form; the latter, though farinaceous and insipid, is a substitute for bread; it resembles a small white radish; the watery potatoe, oval and greenish, is prepared like our ordinary potatoe, but greatly inferior to it; the small onion; the sweet onion, which bears a lovely flower resembling the taste. Strawberries are abundant and delicious. To this catalogue I could add a number of delicious fruits and roots, which serve as nutriment for the Indians, but [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] would revolt [illegible] [illegible] pass over in silence the camash root, and the peculiar manner in which it is prepared. It is abundant, and, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the climes. It is a small, white, vapid onion, when removed from the earth, but becomes black and sweet when prepared for food. The women arm themselves with long, crooked sticks, to go in search of the camash. After having procured a certain quantity, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible], the [illegible] an excavation [illegible] [illegible] from twelve to fifteen inches deep, and of proportioned diameter, to contain the [illegible]; they cover the bottom with closely-cemented pavement, which they make red hot by means of a fire. After having carefully withdrawn all the coals, they cover the stones with grass or wet hay; then place a layer of camash, another of wet hay, a third of bark overlaid with mould, whereon is kept a glowing fire for fifty, sixty, and sometimes seventy hours. The camash thus acquires a consistency equal to that of the jujube.

It is sometimes made into loaves of various dimensions. It is excellent, especially when boiled with meat; if kept dry, it can be preserved a long time.

As soon as their provisions are exhausted the Indians scour the plains, forests, and mountains, in quest of game. If they are unsuccessful in the chase, their hunger becomes so extreme, that they are reduced to subsist on moss, which is more abundant than the camash. It is a parasite of the pine, a tree common in these latitudes, and hangs from its boughs in great quantities; it appears more suitable for mattresses than for the sustenance of human life. When they have procured a great quantity, they pick out all heterogeneous substances, and prepare it as they do the camash; it becomes compact, and in my opinion, a most miserable food, which in a brief space reduces those who live on it to a [illegible] state of emaciation.

Such are the *Arcs-a-plats*. They know neither industry, art, nor science; the words mine and thine are scarcely known among them. They enjoy, in common, the means of existence spontaneously granted them by Nature; and as they are strangely improvident, they often pass from the greatest abundance to extreme scarci-

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



THE CHIEF REPORTS TO HIS CAMP, THAT BUFFALOS ARE IN SIGHT. (See Letter 3rd.)

They feast well one day, and the following are passed in total abstinence. These two extremes are equally pernicious. Their cadaverous figure sufficiently demonstrates what I here advance. I arrived among the *Assiniboins* in time to witness the grand *fish festival*, which is yearly celebrated; the men only have the privilege of assisting thereat. Around a fire fifty feet long, partially overlaid with stones of the size of a turkey's egg, eighty men range themselves; each man is provided with an osier vessel, cemented with gum and filled with water and fish. The hall where this extraordinary feast is celebrated is constructed of rush mats, and has three apertures, one at either extremity for the entrance of guests; the middle one serves for transporting the fish. All preparations being completed, and each man at his post, the chief, after a short harangue of encouragement to his people, finishes by a prayer of supplication to the "Great Spirit," of whom he demands an abundant draught. He gives the signal to commence, and each one armed with two sticks, flattened at the extremity, makes use of them instead of tongs, to draw the stones from the embers and put them in his kattle. This process is twice renewed, and in the guests of this important [illegible] Finally, they squat around the fire in the most profound silence to enjoy the repast, each trembling lest a bone be disjointed or broken—an indispensable condition (a *sine quâ non*) of a plentiful fishery. A single bone broken would be a [illegible] of capture, and the unlucky culprit banished the society of his comrades, lest his presence should entail on them some dreadful evil.

A species of sturgeon which measures from [illegible] to [illegible], and sometimes twelve feet in length, is taken by the [illegible] in the great lake of Arcs-a-plats.

Since my arrival among the Indians, the feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has ever been to me a day of great consolation. I had time to prepare for the celebration of this solemn festival. Thanks be to the instructions and counsels of a brave Canadian, Mr. [illegible], who for a long time has resided among them in the quality of trader, I found the little tribe of *Arcs-a-plats* [illegible] and in the best dispositions to embrace the faith. They had already been instructed in the principal mysteries of religion. They sang canticles in the French and Indian tongues. They number about ninety families. I celebrated the first Mass ever offered in their [illegible]; after which twenty adults, already advanced in age, and ninety children received baptism. The former were very attentive to all my instructions. In the afternoon, the erection of the cross was as solemn as circumstances would admit. There was a grand salute of ninety guns, and at the foot of the lowly standard of the God-Saviour, the entire tribe made a tender of their hearts to Him, with the promise of inviolable attachment to all the duties of true children of prayer, availing themselves of this occasion to renounce the remains of their ancient juggling and superstition. The cross was elevated on the border of a lake, and the station received the beautiful name of the Assumption. Under the auspices of this good Mother, in whose honor they have for many years sung canticles, we hope that religion will take deep root and flourish amidst this tribe, where union, innocence, and simplicity reign in full vigor. They ardently desire to be taught agriculture, the advantages of which I have explained, and promised to procure the necessary seed and implements of husbandry.

I have the honor to be, monseigneur, your most humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. VII.

A. M. D. G.

Ford of Flat-Bow River, Sept. 2d, 1845.

MONSEIGNEUR,—The *Flat-bows* and *Koetenays* now form one tribe, divided into two branches. They are known throughout the country by the appellation of the *Skalzi.*—Advancing towards the territory of the Koetenays we were enchanted by the beautiful and diversified scenery. We sometimes traversed undulatory woods of pine and cedar, from which the light of day is partially excluded. We next entered sombre forests, where, axe in hand, we were forced to cut our way and wind about to avoid hosts of trees that had been levelled by the autumnal blasts and storms. Some of these forests are so dense that, at the distance of twelve feet, I could not distinguish my guide. The most certain way of extricating one's-self from these labyrinths, is to trust to the horse's sagacity, which, if left unguided, will follow the track of other animals. This expedient has saved me a hundred times.

I cannot refrain from communicating to your lordship the gloomy and harrowing thoughts which imagination conjures up in these dismal regions. The most fearful apprehensions dismay the bravest heart and cause an involuntary shudder, as some dire apparition of a bear or panther stalks in fancy before the mind, whilst groping our way amidst these dark and frightful haunts, from which there is no egress. We caught a transitory glimpse of many charming spots covered with vegetation as we pursued our winding path near the river, wherever it deviated from its natural course. At a place called the Portage, the river crosses a defile of mountains, or rather of precipitous and frightful rocks; and the traveller is compelled, for the distance of eight miles, to risk his life at every step, and brave obstacles that appear, at first sight, insuperable.

Whatever can be imagined appalling seems here combined to terrify the heart—livid gashes of ravines and precipices, giant peaks and ridges of varied hue, inaccessible pinnacles, fearful and unfathomable chasms filled with the sound of ever precipitating waters, long, sloping and narrow banks, which must be alternately ascended, and many times have I been obliged to take the attitude of a quadruped and walk upon my hands; often during this perilous passage did I return fervent thanks to the Almighty for his protection from impending danger. Amid these stern, heaven-built walls of rocks, the water has forced its way in varied forms, and we find cataracts and whirlpools engulfing crags and trees, beneath their angry sway. Whilst the eye rests with pleasure on the rich and russet hues of distant slopes, upland turf and rock-hung flower—the ear is stunned by the confused sounds of murmuring rills, rushing streams, impetuous falls, and roaring torrents.

An extensive plain at the base of the Portage mountain presents every advantage for the foundation of a city. The mountains surrounding this agreeable site are majestic and picturesque. They forcibly recalled to my memory the noble Mapocho Mountains that encompass the beautiful capital of Chili (Santiago). Innumerable little rills, oozing from the mountain's stony bosom, diffuse a transparent haze over the valleys and lower slopes. The fine river Des Chutes, [illegible] down and crosses the plain before it [illegible] to the McGilvray, which tranquilly pursues its course. The quarries and forests appear inexhaustible; and having remarked large pieces of coal along the river, I am convinced that this fossil could be abundantly procured. What would this now solitary and desolate land become, under the fostering hand of civilization? Indeed, the entire tract of the *Skalzi* seems awaiting the benign influence of a civilized people. Great quantities of lead are found on the surface of the earth; and from the appearance of its superior quality, we are led to believe there may be some mixture of silver. Poor, unfortunate Indians! they trample on treasures, unconscious of their worth, and content themselves with the fishery and chase. When these resources fail, they subsist upon roots and herbs; whilst they eye, with tranquil surprise, the white man examining the shining pebbles of their territory. Ah! they would tremble, indeed, could they learn the history of those numerous and ill-fated tribes that have been swept from their land, to make place for Christians who have made the poor Indians the victims of their rapacity. After a few days' journey we arrived at the Prairie du Tabac, the usual abode of the *Kootenays*. Their camp is situated in an immense and delightful valley, bounded by two eminences, which, from their gentle and regular declivity, covered with smooth pebbles, appear to have originally bounded an extensive lake.

On my arrival, I found about thirty lodges of *Kootenays*; hunger had forced many families to cross the great mountain. They came in quest of the buffalo, elk, antelope, and stag. I was received with every demonstration of joy and filial affection by those who remained in the lodges. They hailed me with a long and boisterous discharge of musketry. Several showed me their journal, consisting of a square stick on which they had notched the number of days and weeks elapsed since I abode with them in the neighborhood of the great lake Teteplatte. They had computed forty-one months and some days.

Mr. Berland had exerted his zeal to maintain the *Kootenays* and their brethren in the good dispositions in which I had the consolation of finding them. Since my last visit they have followed, to the very letter, all they remembered of my recommendations. I was obliged to decide some controversial points, which they had misinterpreted or misapprehended. They habitually assembled for morning and evening prayer, continued the practice of singing canticles, and faithfully observed the Sabbath precept.

On the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary I sang High Mass, thus taking spiritual possession of this land, which was now for the first time trodden by a minister of the Most High. I administered the Sacrament of Baptism to one hundred and five persons, among whom were twenty adults. An imposing ceremony terminated the exercises of the day. Amidst a general salute from the camp, a large cross was elevated. The chiefs, at the head of their tribe, advanced and prostrated themselves before that sacred ensign, which speaks so eloquently of the love of a Man-God, who came to redeem a fallen race. At the foot of that sacred emblem, they loudly offered their hearts to him who has declared himself our Master, and the Divine Pastor of souls. This station bears the name of the Holy Heart of Mary. One of our Fathers will soon visit the two branches of this tribe.

Though these poor people were much in want of food, they pressed me to remain some days amongst them, whilst they listened with avidity to my instructions relative to their future conduct. After my departure they divided into small bands to go in search of provisions among the defiles of the mountains.

The 30th August I bade adieu to the *Koote-*

says. Two young men of their tribe offered to conduct me to the country of the *Black-feet*, and a third Indian, an expert hunter and good interpreter, completed the number of my little escort. I then journeyed on towards the sources of the Columbia.—The country we traversed was highly picturesque and agreeably diversified by beautiful prairies, from which poured forth spicy odors of flower, and shrub, and fresh spirit-elating breezes, smiling valleys and lakes, surrounded by, heary and solemn pines, gracefully waving their flexible branches. We also crossed magnificent dark Alpine forests, where the sound of the axe has never resounded; they are watered by streams which impetuously rush over savage crags and precipices from the range of mountains on the right. This stupendous chain appears like some impregnable barrier of colossal firmness.

I am, with every sentiment of the most profound respect, your lordship's humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. VIII.

A. M. D. G.

Head of the Columbia,
September 9th, 1845.

All hail! Majestic Rock—the home,
Where many a wand'rer yet shall come,
Where God himself from his own heart,
Shall health, and peace, and joy impart.

MONSEIGNEUR,—The 4th September, towards noon, I found myself at the source of the Columbia. I contemplated with admiration those rugged and gigantic mountains where the Great River escapes—majestic, but impetuous even at its source; and in its vagrant course it is undoubtedly the most dangerous river on the western side of the American hemisphere. Two small lakes from four to six miles in length, formed by a number of springs and streams, are the reservoirs of its first waters.

I pitched my tent on the banks of the first fork that brings in its feeble tribute, and which we beheld rushing with impetuosity over the inaccessible rocks that present themselves on the right. What sublime rocks! How varied in shape and figure! The fantastic in every form, the attractive, the ludicrous, and the sublime, present themselves simultaneously to the view; and by borrowing ever so little the aid of the imagination, we behold rising before our astonished eyes, castles of by-gone chivalry, with their many-embattled towers—fortresses, surrounded by their walls and bulwarks—palaces with their domes—and, in fine, cathedrals with their lofty spires.

On arriving at the two lakes, I saw them covered with swarms of aquatic birds—coots, ducks, water-fowl, cormorants, bustards, cranes, and swans; whilst beneath the tranquil water lay shoals of salmon in a state of exhaustion. At the entrance of the second lake, in a rather shallow and narrow place, I saw them pass in great numbers, cut and mutilated, after their long watery pilgrimage among the rapids, cataracts, valleys, and falls; they continue their uninterrupted procession during weeks and months.

Perhaps I shall scarcely be believed when I affirm that the salmon fish are qu[illegible] [illegible] with surprise the sharp and vengeful [illegible] [illegible] inflicted. They [illegible] form an immense tomb, for they there die in such numbers as frequently to infect the whole surrounding atmosphere.

In the absence of man, the grey and black bear, the wolf, the eagle, and vulture assemble in crowds, at this season of the year. They fish their prey on the banks of the river, and at the entrance of the lakes;—claws, teeth and bills serving them instead of hooks and darts. From thence, when the snow begins to fall, the bears, plump and fat, resume the road back to their dens in the thick of the forests, and hollows of rocks, there to pass the four sad wintry months in complete indolence, with no other pastime or occupation, than that of sucking their four paws.

If we may credit the Indians, each paw occupies the bear for one moon, (a *month*,) and the task accomplished, he turns on the other side, and begins to suck the second, and so on with the rest.

I will here mention, *en passant*, all the hunters and Indians remark that it is a very uncommon incident for a female bear to be killed when with young, and, notwithstanding, they are killed in all seasons of the year. Where [illegible] go—what becomes of them during the [illegible] they carry their young—is a problem yet to be solved by our mountain hunters.

When emigration, accompanied by industry, the arts and sciences, shall have penetrated into the numberless valleys of the Rocky Mountains, the source of the Columbia will prove a very important point. The climate is delightful; the extremes of heat and cold are seldom known. The snow disappears as fast as it falls; the laborious hand that would till these valleys, would be repaid a hundred fold. Innumerable herds could graze throughout the year in these meadows, where the sources and streams nurture a perpetual freshness and abundance. The hillocks and declivities of the mountains are generally studded with inexhaustible forests, in which the larch tree, pine of different species, cedar and cypress abound.

In the plain between the two lakes, are beautiful springs, whose waters have re-united and formed a massive rock of soft sandy stone, which has the appearance of an immense congealed or petrified cascade. Their waters are soft and pellucid; and of the same temperature as the milk just drawn from the cow. The description [illegible] by Chandler of the famous fountain of Pambouk Kalesi, on the ancient Hieropolis of

Asia Minor, in the valley of Meander, and of which Malte Brun makes mention, might be literally applied to the warm springs at the source of the Columbia. The prospect unfolded to our view was so wonderful, that an attempt to give even a faint idea of it, would savor of romance, without going beyond the limits of fact.

We contemplated with an admiring gaze, this vast slope, which, from a distance, had the appearance of chalk. and when nearer, extends like an immense concreted çascade, its undulating surface resembling a body of water suddenly checked or indurated in its rapid course.

The first lake of the Columbia is two miles and a half distant from the River des Arcs-a-plats, and receives a portion of its waters during the great spring freshet. They are separated by a bottom land. The advantages Nature seems to have bestowed on the source of the Columbia, will render its geographical position very important at some future day. The magic hand of civilized man would transform it into a terrestial paradise.

The Canadian! Into what part of the desert has he not penetrated? The monarch who rules at the source of the Columbia is an honest em-

[illegible] from St. Martin, in the district of Montreal, who has resided for twenty-six years in this desert. The skins of the rein and moose deer are the materials of which his portable palace is composed; and to use his own expression, he EMBARKS on horseback with his wife and seven children, and LANDS wherever he pleases. Here, no one disputes his right, and Polk and Peel, who are now contending for the possession of his dominions, are as unknown to our carbineer, as the two greatest powers of the moon. His *sceptre* is a beaver trap—his *law* a carbine—the one on his back, the other on his arm, he reviews his numerous furry subjects the beaver, otter, muskrat, marten, fox, bear, wolf, sheep, and white goat of the mountains, the black-tailed roe-buck, as well as its red-tailed relatives, the stag, the rein and moose deer; some of which *respect his sceptre*—others *submit to his law.* He exacts and receives from them the tribute of *flesh* and *skins.* Encircled by so much grandeur, undisturbed proprietor of all the sky-ward palaces, the strong holds, the very last refuge which Nature has reared to preserve alive liberty in the earth—solitary lord of these majestic mountains, that elevate their icy summits even to the clouds,—Morigeau (our Canadian) does not forget his duty as a Christian. Each day, morning and evening, he may be seen devoutly reciting his prayers, midst his little family.

Many years had Morigeau ardently desired to see a priest; and when he learned that I was about to visit the source of the Columbia, he repaired thither in all haste to procure for his wife and children the signal grace of baptism. The feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, this favor was conferred on them, and also on the children of three Indian families, who accompany him in his migrations. This was a solemn day for the desert! The august sacrifice of Mass was offered; Morigeau devoutly approached the Holy Table;—at the foot of the humble altar he received the nuptial benediction; and the mother, surrounded by her children and six little Indians, was regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. In memory of so many benefits, a large cross was erected in the plain, which, from that time, is called the *Plain of the Nativity.*

I cannot leave my good Canadian without making an honorable mention of his royal CUISINE A LA SAUVAGE. The first dish he presented me contained two paws of a bear. In Africa, this ragout might have given some alarm; in effect, it bears a striking resemblance to the feet of a certain race. A roast porcupine next made its appearance, accompanied by a moose's muzzle; the latter I found delicious. Finally, the great kettle containing a sort of hotch-potch, or salmagundi, was placed in the midst of the guests, and each one helped himself according to his taste.

Some remains of beef, buffalo, venison, beavers' tails, hare, partridges, &c., made an agreeable, substantial, famous soup.

I am, monseigneur, your most humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. IX.

A. M. D. G.

Foot of the Cross of Peace,
September 15th, 1845.

"——Here
Poplars and birch trees ever quivering played,
And nodding cedars formed a vagrant shade;
On whose high branches, waving with the storm,
The birds of broadest wings their mansion form;
The jay, the magpie, the loquacious crow,
And soar aloft and skim the deeps below.
Here limpid fountains from the clefts distil,
And every fountain forms a noisy rill,
In mazy windings wand'ring down the hill."

Monseigneur,—We bade adieu to the Morigeau family on the 9th, and to their companions of the chase, the *Sioushwaps*. We quitted the upper valley of the Columbia by a small footpath, which soon conducted us to a narrow mountain defile, where the light of day vanished from view, amidst the huge, bold barriers of colossal rocks. The grand, the sublime, the beautiful, here form the most singular and fantastic combinations. Though gray is the prevailing color, we find an immense rock of porphyry, or white-veined granite. Here and there, from the fissures of the rock, or wherever there is a handful of dust, the heavy and immortal pine enroots itself, adding its gloomy verdure to the variegated hues of the torpid rocks. These circuitous paths often present the most ravishing and picturesque vistas; surrounded by colossal walls, the greatest diversity and most beautiful scenery in nature is spread out before the eye, where the plush and cedar rise majestically in these venerable woods, the graceful poplar waves on high its emerald plumes, and fights its battles with the howling storm, whilst over the precipitous and jagged rocks, the scarcely-waving pine fills the brown shade with religious awe. The birch springs from an earth carpetted with moss, and shines like magnificent silver columns, supporting diadems of golden autumnal leaves, amidst the redolent purple-berried juniper and azure turpentines, of these humid dells and forests.

After a day's journey through these primeval scenes, we reached the banks of the river Arcs-a-plats, where innumerable torrents rush headlong, with a thousand mazes from the mountain's brow, and in their union forms [illegible] river. From afar is heard the deafening and continuous sound of its own dashes, as it traverses a rocky bed with extraordinary rapidity. We crossed the river in order to [illegible] passage of another defile, still [illegible] where the waters of the Vermillion have forced an opening. Here, everything strikes the eye; all is wild sublimity, in this profound but turbulent solitude. Projecting mountains rise like holy towers where man might commune with the sky;—terrible precipices hang in fragments overhead—the astounding noise of the deep-tongued waves, in their unconfined flow, resembles that of the angry tempest, sweeping wild and free, like the spirit of liberty. Now the breaking waves play low upon the rock-ribbed beach, and madly plunge into an abyss—anon it returns foaming to its sedgy bed, apparently sporting with the sedges for diversion—falling from slope to slope, from cascade to cascade, passing in its course a long train of rapids, now concealing itself under the tufted foliage of cedar and pine—again pouring its brilliant and crystalline waters into a capacious basin, as if to take breath before quitting the ravine, and finally precipitating its wandering course with renovated vigor.

From this almost impenetrable forest issues a harmonious sound. 'T is the whistling or lowing of the noble stag, calling its companion. The moose, the most vigilant of animals, gives the signal of alarm. He has heard the cracking branch—he has inhaled the hunter's deadly breath; a confused noise is heard from the mountain; the sportsman raises his eager eye to its summit, and scans a flock of rein-deer perched upon the snow; they are started at the approach of man; in a instant they are lost among the inaccessible pinnacles, the

> "Palaces where Nature thrones
> Sublimity in icy halls."

We often catch a glimpse of the graceful forms and nimble feats of the roe-bucks, as they caper and gallop, or tarry an instant to look around, with their lancet ears distended to catch every sound; these wild, forest stragglers resume their course, and finally penetrate into the sombre forest. Flocks of wild goats gambol carelessly and tranquilly beside herds of mountain sheep above overhanging precipices and peaked rocks, chequered by patches of snow, far beyond the reach of human footsteps.

A monstrous animal, the grey bear, which replaces on our mountains the African lion, is not content with growling and menacing the intrepid venturer, who dares infringe on his cavernous dominions, but grinds his teeth, expressive of his rage. Suddenly, a well-aimed gun-shot forces him to make a lowly reference; the formidable beast rolls in the dust, biting the sand saturated with his blood, and expires.

The ordinary music of the desert is, the shrill cry of the panther, and the howling of the wolf. The diminutive mountain hare, six inches high, and whose biography has not yet found a place in natural history, amuses itself amidst the stony rubbish, and exhibits wonderful activity; whilst his neighbor, the lubberly porcupine, clambers up, seats himself upon a branching cypress and gnaws the bark. He views the eager huntsman with a careless and indifferent air, unconscious that his tender flesh is regarded as a most delicious morsel. The industrious beaver, like a wary sentinel, warns his family of man's approach by striking the water with his tail. The muskrat, or musquash, plunges immediately into the water. The otter quits his sports and slides upon his belly among the reeds—the timid squirrel leaps from bough to [illegible], until it reaches the topmost shade of the cypress; the marten jumps from tree to tree, and buries itself in the foliage—the whistler and weasel repair to their respective domicils:—a precipitous flight alone saves the fox his rich silvery pelisse—the badger, or the ground-hog, too remote from his dwelling, digs the sandy soil, and buries himself alive, to avoid pursuit—his magnificent skin is destined to adorn the loins of an Indian—it requires the joint efforts of two men to force him from his hiding place, and to kill him.

The evening previous to our egression from the blind mazes of this tangled wood, our eyes were recreated by a ravishing scene. When it presents itself after a disastrous combat, the spectacle consoles the afflicted heart of the savage warrior. From the mountain's top we contemplated the "dance of the manitous or spirits, and the glorious entrance of departed champions into the country of souls." Vast columns of light varying in splendor, appeared to divert and balance themselves in the heavens:—some of perpendicular form; others resembling undultatory waves; now concealing, now exhibiting themselves under diversified aspects until the entire hemisphere seemed brilliantly illuminated. All these masses [illegible] zenith, and then separated under a [illegible] forms.

Mysterious, solemn, cold and clear,
  Their steps majestic rise,
Like barriers round this earthly sphere,
  Like gates of Paradise.
Well may imagination faint
  Before your sacred blaze,
And baffled science fail to paint
  The source of heaven-lit rays.

The aurora borealis, is a phenomenon which I always contemplate with mingled admiration and pleasure. All that is seen, all that is heard in this unfathomable solitude, is both agreeable and instructive. It strikes, captivates, and elevates the mind towards the Author of nature. *Mirabilia opera Domini!*

After much fatigue, labor, and admiration, on the 15th we traversed the high lands separating the waters of Oregon from those of the [illegible] branch of the Sascatshawin, or the [illegible] Bourbon river, so called before the Canadian conquest by the British. It is the largest tributary of the Winnepeg, which flows into Hudson's Bay by the River Nelson, 56 deg. north latitude.

The Christian's standard, *the cross*, has been reared at the source of these two rivers: may it be a sign of salvation and peace to all the scattered and itinerant tribes east and west of these gigantic and lurid mountains.

On the cypress which serves for constructing the cross, the eagle, emblem of the Indian warrior, perches himself. The huntsman aims—the noble bird lies prostrate, and even in his fall, seems to retain his kingly pride. It so forcibly recalls to memory the beautiful lines of the illustrious Campbell, that I quote them in full;—

> Fallen as he is, the king of birds still seems
> Like royalty in ruins. Though his eyes
> Are shut, that looked undazzled on the sun,
> He was the sultan of the sky, and earth
> Paid tribute to his eyrie. It was perched
> Higher than human conqueror ever built
> His bannered fort. * * * *
> * * He cloved the adverse storm
> And cuffed it with his wings. He stopped his flight
> As easily as the Arab reins his steed,
> And stood at pleasure 'neath heaven's zenith, like
> A lamp suspended from its azure dome;
> Whilst underneath him the world's mountains lay
> Like mole-hills, and her streams like lucid threads.

We breakfasted on the bank of a limpid lake at the base of the "Cross of Peace," from whence

I have the honor of dating my letter, and of giving you the renewed assurance of my profound respect and veneration; recommending to your fervent prayers, in a special manner, this vast desert, which contains so many precious souls still buried in the shades of death.

Monseigneur, your very humble and devoted servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. X.

A. M. D. G.

Camp of the Assiniboins, Sept. 26th, 1845.

> "Here bloomy meads with vivid greens are crown'd,
> And glowing violets throw sweet odors round."

Monseigneur,—By a steep declivity we entered a rich valley, agreeably diversified by enamelled meads, magnificent forests, and lakes—in which the salmon-trout so abound, that in a few minutes we procured sufficient for an excellent repast. The valley is bounded on either side by a succession of picturesque rocks, whose lofty summits, rising in the form of pyramids, lose themselves in the clouds. The far-famed Egyptian monuments of Cheops and Cephren dwindle into nought, before this gigantic architectural cliff of nature. The natural pyramids of the Rocky mountains seem to deride the artificial skill of man; they serve as a resting place for the clouds that come hither to seek repose, and to encircle their giant brows. The Lord's omnipotent hand has laid the foundations—*he* has permitted the elements to form them, and in every age they proclaim His power and glory!

We emerged from this delightful valley, on the 18th of September, after a three days' excursion, and recommenced our mountainous peregrination, which presented nothing but obstacles and contusions, both to men and horses. For the space of six hours we were compelled to trace our route across fragments of broken rocks, through an extensive and parched forest, and where millions of half-consumed trees lay extended in every direction. Not a trace of vegetation remained, and never had I contemplated so dismal and destructive a conflagration!

We reached the River des Arcs or Askow, in the evening, and pitched our solitary tent upon the shore. Here we discovered some vestiges of a savage party. Five days previous, nine lodges of Indians had encamped upon the very spot. We made a careful search, and my guides imagined they were the formidable Black-feet! We, the same day, saw two smokes at the extremity of the plain over which these barbarians had travelled. My companions seemed to hesitate, as we drew near the vicinity of these fearful Black-feet. They recounted to me their inauspicious dreams, and wished to deter me from proceeding. One said: "*I* saw myself devoured by a wild bear;" another, "*I* saw ravens and vultures, (ill-omened birds,) hovering over the head of our father;" a third saw a bloody spectacle. I gave them, in my turn, the history of one of *my* sentries, the archetype of vigilance, courage and simplicity.

"Midst the dark horrors of the sable night
(No idle dream I tell nor fancy's strain)
Thrice rose the red man's shade upon my sight,
Thrice vanished into dusky air again.
With courage high my panting bosom swells,
Onward I rushed upon the threatening foe,
When, hark! Horrific rise the spectre's yells
He points the steel and aims the fatal blow;
Guard, sentinel! to arms! to arms! to arms!
Indians! Indians! my voice swelled loud and deep:
The camp is roused at dread of my alarms,
They wake and find—*that I am sound asleep!*

They were greatly amused at the recital of *his* imaginary fancies, and seemed to understand how little import I attached to such visions. "Happen what may," said they, "we shall never quit our father until we seen him in a place of safety." This was precisely what I desired. I could not, however, deceive myself.

I had finally entered a land, the theatre of so many sanguinary scenes. I was now on the very confines of these barbarous people, from which, possibly, I should never return! It not unfrequently happens, that, in their unbridled fury when they hear some relative has been killed, the Black-feet despatch the first stranger they meet, scalp him—and then abandon to the wolves and dogs, the palpitating limbs of the unfortunate victim of their vengeance, hatred, and superstition. I declare to you, I was beset by a thousand disquietudes concerning the fate that awaited me. Poor nature! this timid and fragile *meus homo* is sometimes terrified. He would wish to look back and listen to dreams. My longing desires repeated incessantly—*Advance!* I placed my whole confidence in God—the prayers of so many fervent souls encouraged and re-animated me; I resolved not to be deterred by an uncertain danger. The Lord can, when he pleases, mollify these pitiless and ferocious hearts. The salvation of souls is at stake, and the preservation of the mission of St. Mary's depends on my proceeding; for there, the incursions of the Black-feet are very frequent. What consideration could deter me from a project which my heart had cherished, since my first visit among the mountains?

The 19th and 20th, we followed the tracks of our unknown predecessors, and they appeared more and more recent. I despatched my two guides to reconnoitre, and ascertain whom we were so closely pursuing.—One of them returned the same evening, with the news that he had found a small camp of Assiniboins of the forest; that they had been well received; that a disease reigned in the camp, of which two had lately died, and that they expressed great desire to see the *Black-gown*. The following morning we joined them, and journeyed several days in company.

The Assiniboins of the forest do not amount to more than fifty lodges or families, divided into several bands. They are seldom seen in the plains; the forest is their element, and they are renowned huntsmen and warriors. They travel over the mountains and through the woods, over the different forks and branches of the sources of the Sascatshawin and Athabaska. Agriculture is unknown to this tribe; they subsist exclusively on small animals, such as big-horns, goats, bucks; but especially on the porcupine, which swarms in his region. When pressed by hunger, they have recourse to roots, seeds, and the inner bark of the cypress tree. They own few horses, and perform all their journeys on foot.

Their hunters set out early in the morning, kill all the game they meet, and suspend it to the trees, as they pass along,—their poor wives, or rather their slaves, often bearing two children on their backs, and dragging several more after them, tardily follow their husbands, and collect what game the latter have killed. They had a long file of famished dogs, loaded with their little provisions, etc. Every family has a band of six to twelve of these animals, and each dog carries from 30 to 35 lbs. weight. They are the most wretched animals in existence; from their tender-hearted masters and mistresses they receive more bastinados than morsels, consequently they are the most adroit and incorrigible rogues to be found in the forest. Every evening we find it necessary to hang all our property upon the trees, beyond the reach of these voracious dogs. We are even compelled to barricade ourselves within our tents at night, and surround them with boughs of trees; for, whatever is of leather, or whatever has pertained to a living being, these crafty rogues bear away, and devour. You will say I have little charity for these poor brutes—but be not astonished. One fine evening, having neglected the ordinary precaution of blocking up the entrance of my tent, I next morning found myself without shoes —with a collarless cassock—and *minus* one leg to my *culottes de peau!!!* One of the chiefs of this little camp recounted to me, that last winter, one of his nation, having been reduced to extreme famine, (and such cases are not rare,) had eaten successively, HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN. The monster then fled into the desert, and he has never been heard of since.

The Oregon missionary, Rev. Mr. Bolduc, related in his journal, that at Akena, one of the Gambia Isles, he saw an old dame, who, having had *eight* husbands, had eaten three of them, during a time of famine!! I add this last fact to give you a reverse to the above horrible picture.

The Assiniboins have the reputation of being irascible, jealous, and fond of babbling; in consequence of these bad qualities, battles and murders are not unfrequent among them, and of course continual divisions. Every evening I gave them instruction, by means of an interpreter. They appeared docile, though somewhat timorous: for they had frequently been visited by persons who defamed both priests and religion. I rendered all the little services in my power to their invalids, baptized six children and an old man who expired two days after, he was interred with all the funeral ceremonies and prayers of the church.

Cleanliness is a virtue which has no place in the Indian catalogue of domestic or personal duties. The Assiniboins are filthy beyond conception; they surpass all their neigbours in this unenvied qualification. They are devoured by vermin, which they, in turn, consume. A savage, whom I playfully reprehended for his cruelty to these little invertebral insects, answered me: "He bit me the first, I have a a right to be revenged." Through complacency, I overcame natural disgust, and assisted at their porcupine feast. I beheld the Indians carve the meat on their leathern shirts, highly polished with grease—filthy, and swarming with vermin, they had disrobed themselves, for the purpose of providing a table-cloth!—They dried their hands in their hair—this is their only towel—and as the porcupine has naturally a strong and offensive odor, one can hardly endure the fragrance of those who feast upon its flesh and besmear themselves with its oil.

A good old woman, whose face was anointed with blood, (THE INDIANS' MOURNING WEEDS,) presented me a wooden platter filled with soup; the horn spoon destined for my use was dirty and covered with grease; she had the complaisance to apply it to the broad side of her tongue, before putting it into my unsavory broth.

If a bit of dried meat, or any other provision is in need of being cleansed, the dainty cook fills her mouth with water and spirts it with her whole force upon the fated object. A certain dish, which is considered a prime delicacy among the Indians, is prepared in a most singular manner, and they are entitled to a patent for the happy faculty of invention. The whole process belongs exclusively to the female department. They commence by rubbing their hands with grease, and collecting in them the blood of the animal; which they boil with water; finally, they fill the kettle with fat and hashed meat. But—HASHED WITH THE TEETH! Often half a dozen old women are occupied in this mincing operation during hours; mouthful after mouthful is masticated, and thus passes from the mouth into the cauldron, to compose the choice ragout of the Rocky mountains. Add to this by way of an exquisite desert, an immense dish of [illegible] composed of pulverized ants, grass-hoppers and locusts, that had been dried in the sun, and you may then be able to form some idea of Indian luxury.

The American porcupine, the *Hystrix dorsata*, is called by modern Zoologists, the *Prickly Beaver*. In fact there is great similarity between the two species in size and form, and both inhabit the same region. The porcupine, like the beaver, has a double peltry or fur; the first is long and soft; the second, is still softer, and greatly resembles down or felt. They both have two long sharp, strong tusks, at the extremity of the jaw-bone. The Flat-heads affirm that the porcupine and beaver are brothers, and relate that anciently they abode together; but that, having frequently been discovered by their enemies, through the indolence, idleness and extreme aversion of the porcupines for the water, the beavers met in council and unanimously agreed upon a separation. The latter availed themselves of a fine day and invited their spiny brethren to accompany them in a long ramble, among the cypress and juniper of the forest. The indolent and heedless porcupines, having copiously regaled themselves with the savory buds of the one, and the [illegible] of the other, extended their weary limbs upon the verdant moss, and were soon lost in profound sleep. This was the anticipated moment for the wily beavers to bid a final adieu to their porcupine relatives.

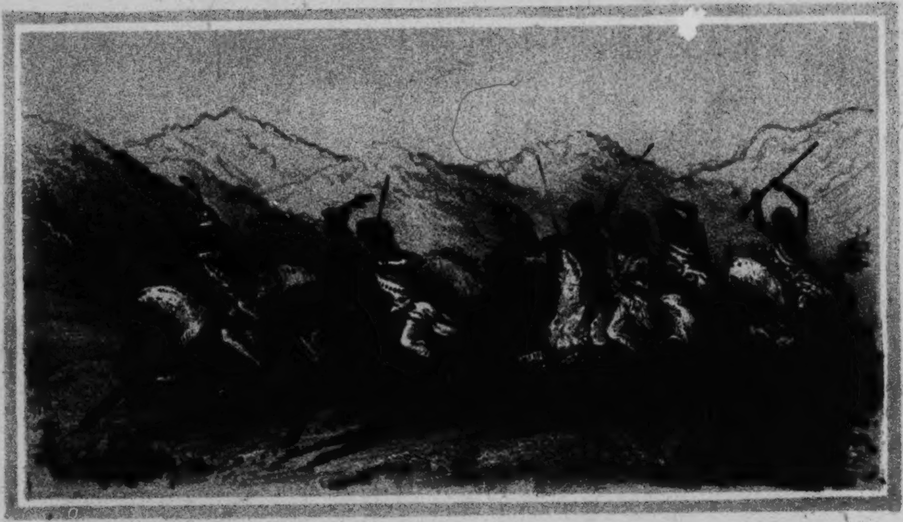
The Assiniboins inhabiting the plains are far more numerous than their mountain brethren. They number about six hundred lodges; they own a greater number of horses, and the men, in general, are more robust, and of a commanding stature. They are more expert in thieving, are greater topers, and are perpetually at war. They hunt the buffalo in the great plains between the Sascatshawin, the Red river, Missouri, and Yellow Stone.

The Crows, Black-feet, Arikaras and Sioux are their most inveterate enemies.—They speak nearly the same language as the Sioux, and have the same origin.

I have the honor to be, with the most profound respect and veneration, monseigneur, your very humble and very obedient servant in Christ Jesus,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

V.



THE CHIEF AT THE HEAD OF HIS HUNTERS.

N° 5

No. XI.

A. M. D. G.

Fort of the Mountains, October 5, 1845.

Monseigneur,—The last few days we journeyed with the little Assiniboin camp, the aspect of the country offered nothing very interesting. We passed from valley to valley between two high chains of adamantine mountains, whose slopes are, here and there, ornamented with mounds of perpetual snow. A beautiful crystalline fountain issues from the centre of a perpendicular rock about five hundred feet high, and then pours its waters over the plain in foam and mist.

The 30th we separated from the Assiniboins; the path conducted us through a thick forest of cypress; I am told this is the last—Deo Gratias! These belts of tall firs are very numerous, and form great obstacles and barriers to land communication between the east and west of the mountains. Here is a little word of advice to give all who wish to visit these latitudes. At the entrance of each thick forest, one should render himself as slender, as short, and as contracted as possible, imitating the different evolutions in all encounters of an intoxicated cavalier, but with skill and presence of mind. I mean to say, he should know how to balance himself—cling to the saddle in every form, to avoid the numerous branches that intercept his passage, ever ready to tear him into pieces, and flay his face and hands. Notwithstanding these precautions, it is rare to escape without paying tribute in some manner to the ungracious forest. I one day found myself in a singular and critical position: in attempting to pass under a tree that inclined across the path, I perceived a small branch in form of a hook, which threatened me. The first impulse was to extend myself upon the neck of my horse. Unavailing precaution! It caught me by the collar of my surtout, the horse still continuing his pace.—Behold me suspended in the air—struggling like a fish at the end of a hook. Several respectable pieces of my coat floated, in all probability, a long time in the forest, as an undeniable proof of my having paid toll in passing through it. A crooked [illegible] [illegible] an eye black and blue—two deep scratches on the cheek, would, in a civilized country, have given me the appearance rather of a bully issuing from the *Black Forest*, than a missionary.

To render a bad forest superlatively so, a great fall of snow is necessary. This special favor was lavished upon us in this last passage. Wo to the first pedestrians! The branches groan under the burden of their snowy shroud, and seem to present the motto: "*Si tangas frangas!*" and assuredly, at each rubbing of the hat, the least touching of the arm or leg, a deluge of snow showers down upon the shivering cavalier and horse. Immediately the branch rises proudly as if in derision. On such occasions, there is nothing better to be done than to form a rear guard, and walk in the track of the predecessor.

In pursuing our route, the 27th, on one of the branches of the river "à la Biche," (Red Deer on the maps), we remarked several sulphurous fountains, which furnish great quantities of sulphur, and a coal mine, apparently very abundant.

I here beg the favor of a short digression from my subject. Coal abounds east of the Rocky the plains, on the borders of the Missouri and in the Stony Rocks on the Sascatshawin and Athabaska. Sulphur is found in abundance, and saltpetre not scarce in many parts of the mountains. I have already spoken of lead in the country of the "Kootenays," the name of the river at the copper mine in the north, indicates its richness; bars of this precious metal are discovered among the rocks bordering the river. Black salt is found in powder, and very plentiful in the Pays Serpenté.

The valley is picturesque and variegated; flocks of sheep and goats contribute to beautify the scenery. We find many tracks of the bears and buffaloes; on seeing the latter my party became animated; for the buffaloes' flesh is, without contradiction, the most delicate of these regions. One is never tired of it. Hitherto, the animals of the mountains had abundantly satisfied our necessities, for the huntsmen killed no less than eighteen pieces, without counting the fowl and fish which are so plentiful in this country. The same evening the remainder of our provisions was consumed, and a buffalo chase was proposed for the following day. One of the sportsmen set out early, and at breakfast time we perceived him returning with a small fat cows; immediately the ribs, tripes, etc., honored the fire with their presence. The rest of the day was spent in seeking fresh provisions.

The 30th, we continued our route through the valley, where a rivulet of clear water meanders. It is similar to all the other valleys we [illegible] of the mountains, agreeably diversified with meadows, lakes, and forests—the valleys [illegible] in proportion as one descends the [illegible] disappear—the mountains decrease, [illegible] insensibly to commingle with one another. Some are covered with forests even to their tops, others present cones, [illegible] ramparts, covered with rich verdure.

The 4th October, after having traversed the great chain of mountains [illegible] days in pursuit of the Black-Feet, we entered [illegible] plain, this ocean of prairies, inhabited by a multitude of roving savages, [illegible] est superstition. The Black-Feet, Crows, Serpents, (Arikaras) Assiniboins of the plains, [illegible] Sheyennes, Cammanches, Sioux, [illegible] Pawnees, Kanis, [illegible] Ajouas, [illegible] without pastors! We hope that Divine Providence has not deferred the epoch, when the darkness now overwhelming these unhappy regions will give place to the [illegible] the gospel;—that worthy and zealous pastors will come to guide in the way of salvation these poor and unhappy children of the desert, who, during so many ages, have groaned under the dominion of the devil, and among whom the war-song and the cry of carnage never ceased to resound. There, we hope, will reign in their turn peace and Christian charity, and the fragrance of divine love and praise ascend to the only true God.

The worthy Bishop of Juliopolis has established his See on the Red river, a tributary of the Winnepeg, amidst the possessions of the Anglo-Indians. Already two of his zealous missionaries, Rev. Messrs. Thibault and Bourassa, have penetrated to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains, whilst other indefatigable priests have been employed, for many years, in extending the kingdom of God in this immense diocese. The population of Red River is about 5,500 souls, of whom 3,175 are Catholics. There are 780 houses inhabited. I had the honor of receiving a letter from the Rev. Mr. Thibault on my arrival in this latitude. He says:

"From the month of March to September last, I have labored among the mountain nations; they are well disposed to embrace the faith. I cannot give you a better idea of these people than by comparing them to the Flat-heads. I have baptized more than five hundred children and adults in the course of this mission. As soon as I find the opportunity of a water conveyance, I shall continue my labors among these good savages, and extend my route as far as McKenzie's river. A rich harvest would be there found for many laborers in the sacred ministry, for this nation is populous and occupies a vast extent of country, without including several other nations I visited this summer. 'Come, then, to us,' said they, 'we, also, shall be happy to learn the joyful news you have brought our brethren of the mountains; we are to be pitied, not knowing the word of the Great Spirit; be, therefore, charitable to us—come, teach *us* the way of salvation—we will listen to it.'

"My fellow-laborer, Bourassa, set out in September, to announce the Gospel to the Indians residing near the river de la Paix."

From Lake St. Anne, or Manitou, the ordinary residence of these two gentlemen, they extend their apostolic course to the different tribes on the rivers Athabaska and McKenzie, Peace river, and Slave lake.

Within the limits, as far as they have travelled, are found the Black-Feet, Crees, Assiniboins of the forest, of the mountains, Beaver Hunters, Flat-side Dogs, Slaves, and Deer-Skins. (It is by these names that the different Indians are known among the whites and travellers.)

The great Indian district of the United States is (if I may say so) the only one deprived of spiritual succor and the means of salvation. It contains several hundred thousand savages. This vast territory is bounded on the north-west by the Anglo-Indian possessions—east by the Western States—south by Texas and Mexico—west by the Rocky Mountains. It contains many forts or trading houses, in which the greater number of persons employed are Canadian Catholics or French creoles. The principal of these forts are, Fort des Corbeaux, or Alexander, on the Yellow Stone, Fort la Ramee, on a branch of the river Platte, Fort Osage, on the river of the same name—Fort Pied-noir, or Lewis, at the mouth of the river Maria, Fort Union near the mouth of the Yellow Rock, Fort Berthold, Fort Mandan or Clark near the mouth of the Little Missouri, Fort Pierre, Fort Look-out and Fort Vermillion at the mouth of this river, the other trading houses among the Pottowatomies of Council Bluffs and of Belle-vue for the Otoes and Pawnees. The great depository which furnishes these Forts and receives all the peltry and buffalo hides, is kept at St. Louis.

Monseigneur Loras, Bishop of Dubuque, has sent two priests among the Sioux, on the river St. Pierre, a tributary of the Mississippi.

The Society of Jesus has a mission among the Pottowatomies on Sugar Creek, a tributary of the Osage river. The Ladies of the Sacred Heart have an establishment here. During the summer of 1841, the late distinguished Madame de Galitzin, provincial of the Order in America, visited this section of the country for the purpose of founding, among these rude savages, a house of education, in which the hapless children of the desert now enjoy the benefit of being instructed in the Christian faith, of being formed to habits of industry and cleanliness, and acquiring a knowledge of those branches of education suited to their condition.—These two missions are located near the frontiers of the States, and are the only ones in this immense territory.

The upper Missouri, and all its branches as far as the Rocky Mountains, are without spiritual assistance. Wherever *the priest* has passed in traversing the desert, he has been received with open arms among the tribes that rove over this country—alas! so long a time forgotten and neglected!

The evening of 4th October, I arrived at the Fort des Montagnes, belonging to the Hon. Hudson Bay Company, without having accomplished the object of my travels and my desires, namely, meeting the *Black-feet.* The respectable and worthy commander of the Fort, Mr. Harriot, an Englishman by birth, is among the most amiable gentlemen I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He invited, and received into his hospitable Fort the poor missionary, a Catholic and stranger, with a politeness and cordiality truly fraternal. These qualities characterize all the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company, and although Mr. Harriot is a Protestant, he encouraged me to visit the *Black-feet,* who would soon arrive at the Fort, promising me to use all his influence with these barbarians to obtain me a friendly reception. He has resided many years among them, nevertheless he did not conceal from me that I should soon be exposed to great dangers. "We are in the hands of God—may His holy will be done."

I am, with the most profound respect and esteem, monseigneur, your very humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XII.

A. M. D. G.

Fort of the Mountains,
October 30th, 1845.

Mo[illegible].—A band of about twenty Crees, encamped near the Fort, came to shake hands cordially with me on my arrival. The joy my presence seemed to occasion them, proved that I was not the first priest they had seen. Moreover, the greater number wore medals and crosses. They informed me that they too had been so fortunate as to have a *Black-Gown*, (Rev. Mr. Thibault,) who taught them to know and serve the Great Spirit—and baptized all their little children, with the exception of those who were absent on the occasion. These children were brought to me—I administered baptism to them, and at the same time to one of my guides, a Kootenay. During their stay at the Fort, I gave [illegible] [illegible]tions every [illegible].

Two Crees, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] father and son, had been [illegible] years since. The presence of the offending party for the first time since the perpetration of the murder, rekindled in the others that spirit of rancor and revenge so natural to an Indian's breast, and there was every reason to apprehend fatal consequences from the old feud.

With the approbation of Mr. Harriot, I assembled them all in the Fort; the governor himself had the kindness to be my interpreter. He made a long discourse on the obligation and [illegible] of their coming to a sincere reconciliation. [illegible] matter was discussed in form, each [illegible] his opinion in turn, with a good [illegible] moderation that surprised me. I had the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing the calumet passed around the assembly. This is the solemn pledge of peace—the tok[illegible] brotherhood—the most formal de[illegible] of the entire forgetfulness and [illegible] injury.

The Cree nation is consid[illegible] and numbers more than [illegible] This tribe is one of the [illegible] of the Black[illegible] [illegible] six hun[illegible] [illegible] the country they traverse extends from the bases of the Rocky Mountains, between the two forks of the Sascatshawin, some distance beyond the Red River. Their turbulent and warlike spirit, and rapacity for plunder, especially for horses, are among the great obstacles which retard the conversion of the larger portion of this tribe.

The example of their brethren, who listen with docility to the exhortations of their zealous and indefatigable missionary will, we trust, produce fruit in due time, and be imitated by the entire nation.

To give you an idea of their military discipline, and of the profound superstition in which these unfortunate people are still immersed, I will relate to you some of their proceedings.

The Crees were meditating a deadly stroke upon the Black-Feet, and for this purpose they collected all their ready forces, amounting to more than eight hundred warriors. Before setting out in quest of the enemy, every species of juggling and witchcraft imaginable was resorted to, in order to secure the success of the expedition. It was decided that a young girl, with a bandage over her eyes, should be placed at the head of the Indian army, and thus blindfold, serve as a guide to the combatants. In case of success, the heroine was destined to become the bride of the most valiant. According to the Oracle, none but the great *chief* himself had the privilege of shoeing or unshoeing her.

This concluded, they began their march, intoxicated with confidence and presumption, following this extraordinary guide over hills and valleys, ravines, marshes, and swamps. One day she would direct her steps towards the north, the next to the south or west—the point of the compass mattered naught—the Manitou of war was supposed to guide her, and day after day the infatuated Crees continued to follow the steps of the blindfolded Indian. They had already penetrated far into the plain, when they were discovered by a party of seven Black-feet. The latter might easily have escaped under favor of the night, but the Partisan, or Black-foot Chieftain, a man of undaunted courage, determined to oppose this formidable force. With the aid of their poniards they made themselves a hollow, in which they took shelter.

The following morning, at day-break, the eight hundred champions surrounded their feeble prey. The first who pressed forward to dislodge them were driven back several times, with the loss of seven men and fifteen wounded. The failure of ammunition at length put the Black-feet at the mercy of the Crees, by whom they were cut into pieces. The first engagement threw the victorious party into consternation, for they too, numbered seven killed and fifteen wounded. They removed the bandage from the young heroine's eyes, and the *Manitous* whom they had thought so propitious, being now judged unfavorable to their warlike projects, the warriors hastily dispersed, taking the nearest road back to their respective homes.

The Crees have a rather singular custom among them, and one contrary to the practice of other nations. They stain the faces of the warriors who fall in combat, clothe them in their richest ornaments, and thus expose them in places conspicuous to their enemies. They place near them their guns, bows and arrows, to show that in their death there was no cause for compassion; and this they do purposely that they may be cut into pieces—an opportunity which an enemy never suffers to escape, and which a Cree warrior regards as the height of [illegible]. Other nations, on the contrary, [illegible] off and conceal their dead, to save them from the rapacity and insults of their enemies, [illegible] cut into pieces even [illegible] considered a great dishonor among them.—The Crees and *Sauteux* are allies, and considerably intermixed by reciprocal marriages. The latter form the most numerous and widely-diffused nation of these parts.—They are to be met with from the confines of Lower Canada even to the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

This is also the nation of medicine, *par excellence*:—for all pretend to be jugglers, and sell their medicines and quackery at a high price. In consequence of this attachment to their old, superstitious practices, and the great profits they derive from them, the seeds of the Divine Word has hitherto fallen upon an unprofitable soil. An adroit impostor who has been baptized, and who is, moreover, a great medicine man among them, has contributed not a little to keep his nation in an obstinate ignorance, which makes them prefer the shades of paganism to the beneficial light of the gospel. Falling one day into a species of lethargy, it was thought that he had expired—but recovering after a short time, he assembled his band, and told them the following story:

"Immediately after my death I repaired to the heaven of the white men, or Christians, where the Great Spirit and Jesus Christ dwell, but they refused to admit me on account of my red skin. I then went to the country where the souls of my ancestors are, and there, too, I was refused admittance on account of my baptism. I am, therefore, come back to this earth, to renounce the promises I made in baptism and resume my medicine bag, hoping to expiate my former error by my sincere attachment to jugglery, and thus render myself once more worthy of the beautiful and spacious plains of that happy and delightful abode, where reigns everlasting spring, and numberless flocks and herds afford an abundant and everlasting subsistence to all the inhabitants of the Indian Elysium."

This extravagant report which has been circulated throughout the whole tribe and among the neighboring people, has greatly contributed to attach them to their old customs and superstitions,—and make them turn a deaf ear to the instructions of their worthy missionary.

The Rev. Mr. Belcourt has, notwithstanding, succeeded in converting a considerable number, whom he has persuaded to renounce the illusions of their brethren, and united in a village at St. Paul des Sauteux, where they persevere fervently in all the practices of religion. The number of faithful, in this spot, increases every year.

At length, on the 25th October, thirteen Black-Feet arrived at the Fort. They saluted me with a politeness truly *à la sauvage*, rough and cordial, at the same time. The old chief embraced me quite tenderly when he learned the object of my journey. He was distinguished from his companions by his dress—being decorated from head to foot with eagles' plumes, and wearing a large breast-plate in form of medallion, *figured with blue*, as a mark of distinction. He was profuse in attention to me, making me sit beside him whenever I went to visit them in their apartment—shaking me affectionately by the hand and amicably rubbing my cheeks with his scarlet-painted nose. He cordially invited me to his country, offering to be my guide and to introduce me to his people. The difference of physiognomy existing between the Indians inhabiting the plains east of the mountains and those near the upper waters of the Columbia, is as great as the stupendous rocks that separate them. The latter are remarkable for their mildness, serenity and affability, while cruelty, craft—the word BLOOD, in fine, may be read in every feature of the Black-Foot Indian.

Scarcely could an innocent hand be found in the whole nation. The Lord, however, is all powerful—"from stones he can raise up children unto Abraham," and, full of confidence in the treasures of His holy grace and mercies, I purpose to visit them. The essential point and my greatest perplexity is, to find a good and faithful interpreter; the only one now at the Fort is a suspicious and dangerous man: all his employers speak ill of him—he makes fine promises. In the alternative of either renouncing my project or being of some utility to those poor, unfortunate Indians, I accept his services. May he be faithful to his engagement!

I have the honor to be, monseigneur, your very humble and very obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XIII.

A. M. D. G.

Fort of the Mountains,
October 30th, 1845.

The year 1845 will be a memorable epoch in the sad annals of the Black-Feet nation. It has been a year of disasters. In two skirmishes with the Black-Feet and Kalispels, they lost twenty-one warriors. The Crees have carried off a great number of their horses, and twenty-seven scalps. The Crows have struck them a mortal blow—fifty families, the entire band of the *petite Robe*, were lately massacred, and one hundred and sixty women and children have been led into captivity.

What a dreadful state for these unfortunate beings. In the first excitement, numbers of the captives were sacrificed by the Crow squaws to the manes of their husbands, brothers, fathers, or children. The survivors were condemned to slavery. The smallpox shortly after made its appearance in the conquerors' camp, unexpected rapidly from lodge to lodge. The Black-Feet had suffered from this scourge a few years previous, and thousands had fallen victims to it.

The Crows, therefore, interrogated their captives to know by what means they had escaped death. A dark spirit of vengeance seized the latter; they counselled cold baths as the only efficacious remedy, to stop the progress of the disease. The sick immediately plunged into the water, and mothers went to the river to bathe their little children. Some plunged into their graves; others gave up their last sigh while endeavoring to reach the shore—and disconsolate mothers returned to their cabins with dead or expiring infants in their arms. Cries of despair succeeded to the shouts of victory—desolation and mourning replaced the fanatic, barbarous joy of the Crows. Death visited every tent of the victorious camp!

The tradition of man's creation and future immortality exists among most of the Indian tribes; I have had the opportunity of visiting and questioning them on the subject. Those who live by fishery, suppose their Heaven to be full of lakes and rivers, abounding in fish, whose enchanted shores and verdant islands produce fruits of every kind.

I encamped on the banks of two lakes to the east of the Rocky Mountains, which the Black-Feet call the *lake of men* and the *lake of women.* According to their traditions, from the first of these issued a band of young men, handsome and vigorous, but poor and naked. From the second an equal number of ingenious and industrious young women, who constructed and made themselves clothing. They lived a long time separate and unknown to each other, until the great Manitou Wizakeschak, or the old man, (still invoked by the Black-Feet,) visited them; he taught them to slay animals in the chase, but they were yet ignorant of the art of dressing skins. Wizakeschak conducted them to the dwelling of the young women, who received their guests with dances and cries of joy. Shoes, leggins, shirts, and robes, garnished with porcupine quills, were presented them. Each young woman selected her guest, and presented him with a dish of seeds and roots; the men, desiring to contribute to the entertainment, sought the chase, and returned loaded with game. The women liked the meat, and admired the strength, skill, and bravery of the hunters. The men were equally delighted with the beauty of their trappings, and admired the industry of [illegible] men. Both parties began to think they were necessary to each other, and Wizakeschak presided at the solemn compact in which it was agreed that the men should become the protectors of the women, and provide all necessaries for their support: whilst all other family cares should devolve upon the women.

The Black-Feet squaws often bitterly complain of the astonishing folly of their mothers in accepting such a proposition; declaring, if the compact were yet to be made, they would arrange it in a very different manner.

The Black-Foot heaven is a country composed of *sandy hills*, which they call *Espatchekie*, whither the soul goes after death, and where they will find again all the animals they have killed, and all the horses they have stolen. The buffalo, hind, and stag, abound there. In speaking of the departed, a Black-Foot never says, such a one is dead, but *Espatchekie etape*—to the *Sand hills* he is gone!

Fort Augustus, on the Saschatshewin,
December [illegible]

Monseigneur,—I arranged with the [illegible] Black-Feet of whom I spoke in my [illegible] they should precede me among their people, to pave the way, as it were, and prepare their minds to receive me.—Everything seemed propitious, and accordingly, on the 31st of October, I took leave of the friendly Mr. Harriot. I was accompanied by my interpreter, and a young Metif of the Cree nation, who had charge of the horses. Notwithstanding his good resolutions, my interpreter did not long leave me in doubt of his true character. The wolf cannot remain concealed beneath the sheep's clothing. He became sullen and peevish, always choosing to halt in those places where the poor beasts of burden could find nothing to eat, after their long day's journey. The farther we penetrated into the desert, the more and more sulky he became. It was impossible to draw from him a single pleasant word, and his incoherent mutterings and allusions became subjects of serious apprehension. Thus passed ten sorrowful days; my last two nights had been nights of anxiety and watching; when fortunately, I encountered a Canadian, on whom I prevailed to remain with me some time. The following day my interpreter disappeared. Although my situation was extremely precarious in this dangerous desert without interpreter, without guide, yet I could not but feel relieved of a heavy burden by the departure of this sullen and gloomy fellow. Had it not been for my opportune meeting with the Canadian, it is probable I should not have escaped his deep laid scheme against me.

Friends and travellers in the desert, beware of choosing for your guide, or placing your dependence on a morose Metif, especially if he has been for some time a resident among the savages; for such men usually possess all the faults of the white man joined to the cunning of the Indian. I determined to continue my route in search of a Canadian interpreter, whom we understood was some distance in advance of us on the same road. For eight successive days we wandered on in that labyrinth of valleys, but in vain; although in the heart of their territory, neither the Canadian nor the Black-Feet were to be found. Large marauding parties of the Crees were beating the country at that time, and it appeared evident from the tracks, that they had carried everything before them. It snowed without intermission during four days;—our poor horses were nearly exhausted—my wallet contained nothing but crumbs—the passage from the east to the western side of the mountains was become impracticable, and I had no alternative, but to repair to one of the forts of the Hudson Bay Company, and beg hospitality during the inclement season.

The entire region in the vicinity of the first eastern chain of the Rocky Mountains, serving as their base for thirty or sixty miles, is extremely fertile, abounding in forests, plains, prairies, lakes, streams, and mineral springs. The rivers and streams are innumerable, and on every side offer situations favorable for the construction of mills. The northern and southern branches of the Sascatshawin water the district I have traversed, for a distance of about three hundred miles. Forests of pine, cypress, thorn, poplar and aspen trees, as well as others of different kinds, occupy a large portion of it, covering the declivities of the mountains, and banks of the rivers.

These, ordinarily, take their rise in the highest chains, whence they issue in every direction like so many veins. The beds and sides of these rivers are pebbly, and their courses rapid, but as they recede from the mountains they widen, and the currents lose something of their impetuosity. Their waters are usually very clear. In this climate wens are not unfrequent.

The country would be capable of supporting a large population, and the soil is favorable for the produce of barley, corn, potatoes, and beans, which grow here as well as in the more southern countries.

Are these vast and innumerable fields of hay forever destined to be consumed by fire, or perish in the autumnal snows? How long shall these superb forests be the haunts of wild beasts? And these inexhaustible quarries, these abundant mines of coal, lead, sulphur, iron, copper, and saltpetre—can it be that they are doomed to remain for ever inactive? Not so—the day will come when some laboring hand will give them value: a strong, active, and enterprising people are destined to fill this spacious void.—The wild beasts will, ere long, give place to our domestic animals; flocks and herds will graze in the beautiful meadows that border the numberless mountains, hills, valleys, and plains of this extensive region. A large portion of the surface of the country is covered with artificial lakes, formed by the beavers. On our way, we had frequently occasion to remark, with wonder and admiration, the extent and height of their ingeniously constructed dams and solid lodges. These are remains of the admirable little republics, concerning which so many wonders have justly been recorded. Not more than half a century ago, such was the number of beavers in this region, that a good hunter could kill a hundred in a month's space.

I reached Fort Augustus or Edmondton towards the close of the year. Its respectable Commandant, the worthy Mr. Rowan, received me with all the tenderness of a father, and together with his inestimable family, showed me every kindness and attention. Never shall I have it in my power to cancel the debt of gratitude I owe them.—May heaven protect and repay them with its choice blessings; such is the most sincere prayer of a poor priest, who will ever remember them.

I must await a more favorable moment for visiting the Black-Feet. The skirmishing parties appear to be still scouring the country. The tidings which reach us concerning them tell only of plunder and bloodshed. Meanwhile, I have the honor of being, with profound respect and esteem, Monseigneur, your very humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. SMET. S. J.

No. XIV.

A. M. D. G.

Fort Jasper, April 16th, 1846.

MONSEIGNEUR,—Fort Edmondton or Auguste is the great emporium of the Hudson Bay Company in the districts of Upper Sascatshawin and Athabasca: Forts Jasper, Assiniboine, Little Slave Lake, on the river Athabasca, Forts des Montagnes, Pitt, Carrollton, Cumberland, on the Sascatshawin, depend on it. The respectable and worthy Mr. Rowan, Governor of this immense district, unites, to all the amiable and polite qualities of a perfect gentleman, those of a sincere and hospitable friend; his goodness and paternal tenderness render him a true patriarch amidst his charming and numerous family. He is esteemed and venerated by all the surrounding tribes, and though advanced in age, he possesses extraordinary activity.

The number of servants at Edmondton, including children, is about eighty. They form a well-regulated family. Besides a large garden, a field of potatoes and wheat, belonging to the establishment, the lakes, forests, and plains of the neighborhood furnish provisions in abundance. On my arrival at the Fort, the ice-house contained thirty thousand white fish, each weighing four pounds, and five hundred buffaloes, the ordinary amount of the winter provisions. Such is the quantity of aquatic birds in the season, that sportmen often send to the Fort carts full of fowls. Eggs are picked up by thousands in the straw and reeds of the marshes.

The greater number of those employed being Catholics, I found sufficient occupation. Every morning I catechized the children, and gave an instruction; in the evening, after the labors of the day, I recited the prayers for the honorable Commander and his servants. I must acknowledge, to the credit of the inhabitants of Edmonton, that their assiduity and attention to religious duties, and the kindness and respectful regard evinced for me, were a source of great consolation during my sojourn of two months among them. May God, who has granted them so liberally and plentifully the dews of the earth, enrich them likewise with those of Heaven;

such is the most sincere wish and prayer of a friend who will never forget them.

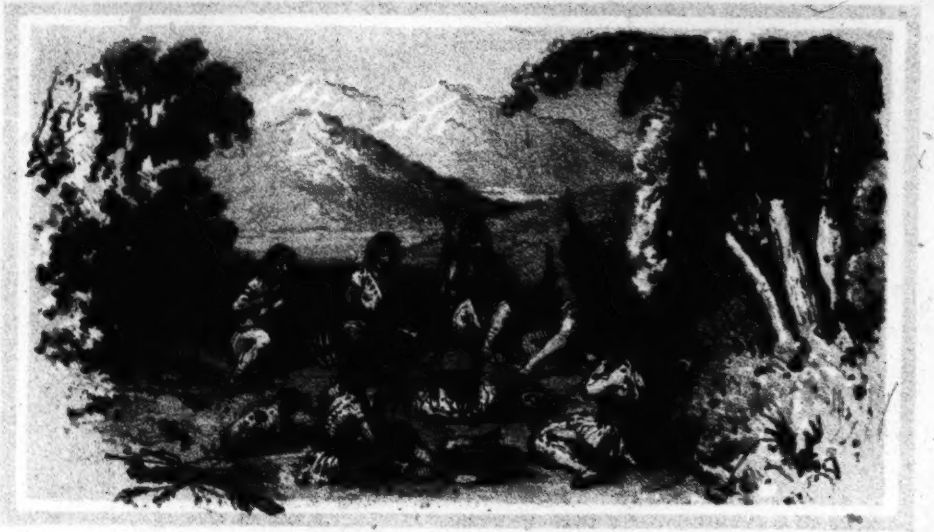
I visited Lake St. Anne, the ordinary residence of Messrs. Thibault and Bourassa; the latter gentleman was absent. The distance from the fort to the lake is about fifty miles. I mentioned this interesting mission in my preceding letters, and I will now say a word relative to the country.—The surface of this region is flat for the most part, undulating in some places—diversified with forests and meadows, and lakes teeming with fish. In Lake St. Anne alone were caught, last autumn, more than seventy thousand white fish, the most delicious of the kind; they are taken with the line at every season of the year.

Notwithstanding the rigor and duration of the winter in this northern region, the earth in general appears fertile; vegetation is so forward in the spring and summer, that potatoes, wheat and barley, together with other vegetables of Canada, come to maturity. Lake Saint Anne forms one of a chain of lakes; I counted eleven of them, which flow into the Sascatshawin by the small river Esturgeons, or *Sturgeon*. Innumerable republics of beavers formerly existed there; each lake, each march, each river, bears, even to this day, proofs of their labors. What I here say of beavers is applicable to almost all the Hudson territory. When the reindeer, buffalo, and moose abounded, the Crees were then peaceful possessors ;—animals have disappeared, and with them the ancient lords of the country. Scarcely do we meet with a solitary hut—but now and then the tracks of some large animal. Seventeen families of Metifs, descendants of English Canadians and savages, have assembled and settled around their missionaries. The Crees have gained the buffalo plains, and they contend for them with the Black-Feet, whose mortal foes they have become.

In proportion as the rigors of winter began to give place to the cheering dawn of spring, simultaneously did my pulse beat to approach near the mountain, there to await a favorable opportunity to cross it, so that I might arrive as early as possible at the mission of St. Ignatius.

The 12th of March, I bade farewell to the respectable Rowan family, and to all the servants of the Fort. I was accompanied by three brave Metifs, whom Mr. Thibault was so kind as to procure me. At this season, the whole country lies buried in snow, and voyages are made in sledges drawn by dogs. Our provisions and baggage were conveyed in two of these sledges; the third, drawn by four dogs, was reserved for me. I found this mode of travelling quite a novelty; and on the glittering ice of the rivers and lakes, it was particularly convenient and agreeable. The third day we encamped near Lake de l'Aigle Noir, which abounds in white fish; on the sixth, we arrived at Fort Assiniboine, built in a meadow on the river Athabasca, where it is two hundred and thirty-three fathoms broad, which breadth it seems to preserve more or less until it leaves the Rocky Mountains, its current is extremely rapid. In the spring it can be descended in three days from Fort Jasper to Fort Assiniboine a distance of more than three hundred miles. With our sledges we were nine days accomplishing the journey. The bed of the river is studded with islands, which, by their various positions and features, render the prospect very agreeable. Its shores are covered with thick forests of pine intersecting rocks and high hills which embellish and give a touch of the picturesque to the general monotony of the desert.

The principal branches are the Pembina, which measures four hundred and sixty-four



THE HUNTERS AT THE BUFFALO FEAST.

No. 7.

feet across—the river des Avirons, one hundred and twenty-eight feet; the river Des Gens Libres, the branch McCloud, and river Baptist Berland, are about eighty fathoms wide at their mouth. The rivers Du Vieux, du Milieu, des Prairies, and des Roches, form beautiful currents. Lake Jasper, eight miles in length, is situated at the base of the first great mountain chain. The fort of the same name, and the second lake, are twenty miles higher, and in the heart of the mountains. The rivers Violin and Medicine on the southern side, and the Assiniboine on the northern, must be crossed to arrive there, and to reach the height of land at the *du Committees Punch Bowl*, we cross the rivers Maline, Gens de Colets, Miette and Trou, which we ascended to its source. The river Medicine mingles its waters with those of the Sascatshawin; the Assiniboine and Gents de Colets with those of the Boucane, a tributary of a la Paix. The waters of the Miette, have their source at the same height, with some branches of the river Frazer, which crosses New Caledonia.

Some years since, the valleys and high forests of Athabasca were exclusively appropriated to the chase by the Assiniboines of the forests:

the scarcity of game forced them to quit their land—since their departure the animals have increased in an astonishing manner. In various places on the river, we saw ravages of the beavers which I should have taken for recent encampments of savages, so great a quantity of felled trees was there. Many wandering families of the carrier tribe and Achiganes or Sock Indians of New Caledonia, compelled by hunger, have quitted their country, traversed the east of the mountains, and now cross the valleys of this region in quest of food. They nourish themselves with roots, and whatever they can catch, many of them have their teeth worn to the gums by the earth and sand they swallow with their nourishment. In winter they fare well: for then the moose, elk and reindeer are plentiful. The reindeer feed on a kind of white moss, and the paunch is considered delicious when the food is half digested. By way of a dainty morsel, the Indians pluck out the eyes of fish with the end of the fingers and swallow them raw, likewise the tripes with their whole contents, without further ceremony than placing them an instant on the coals, from thence into the omnibus or general reservoir, without even undergoing the operation of the jaws.

The Montagnees Indians inhabit the lower part of Athabasca, also the great lake of this name. The elk is very common, and the reindeer are found in large bands; the chase of the latter is both easy and singular. They regularly bend their course northward in autumn, and return towards the south in the spring. The Indians know their usual crossing-places over the lakes and rivers—and when the herd (often many hundreds in number) are in the water, and approach the opposite shore, the huntsmen leave their concealment, jump into their light canoes, and yell with all their strength to make them return to the centre; there they harass them, continually driving them from the shore, until the poor animals become exhausted; then begins the work of carnage; they are killed without difficulty by daggers and darts, and it rarely happens that one effects his escape. They cover their huts and dress themselves with the skins of the reindeer. Lakes and marshes being so numerous in this country, swans, geese, bustards, and ducks of various species, come hither in thousands during the spring and autumn. The savages travel over these marshy places in *Rackets* in quest of eggs, on which they mostly subsist during this season. Often squares of several acres are found covered with nests. White fish, carp, trout, and unknown fish, abound in all these lakes and rivers.

Two missionaries, a Father of the order of Oblats of Marseilles and a Canadian priest, are on the way, with the intention of penetrating into the interior of the country. The reception gi[illegible] to Mr. Thibault last summer by the Mon[illegible]nees, leaves little doubt of the happy results of this praiseworthy and holy enterprise. On the banks of the Jasper, we met an old Iroquois called Louis Kwaragkwante, or the travelling sun, accompanied by his family, thirty-six in number. He has been forty years absent from his country, during which he has never seen a priest—has dwelt in the forest of Athabasca on Peace river and subsisted by hunting and fishing. The good old man was overwhelmed with joy, and the children experienced a similar feeling with their father. I will give you the old man's words in English, on learning that I was a priest: "How glad I am to have come here, for I have not seen a priest for many years. To-day I behold a priest, as I did in my own country—my heart rejoices—wherever you go, I shall follow you with my children—all will hear the word of prayer—all will have the happiness to receive baptism.—Therefore my heart rejoices and is happy." The little Iroquois camp immediately set out to follow me to Fort Jasper. Most of them know their prayers in Iroquois. I remained fifteen days at the Fort, instructing them in the duties of religion—after Mass, on Sunday, all were regenerated in the waters of baptism, and seven marriages renewed and blessed. The number of baptized amounted to forty-four; among whom was the lady of Mr. Frazer, (Superintendent of the Fort), and four of his children and two servants.

I have the honor to be, with the most profound respect and high regard, Monseigneur, your very humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XV.

A. M. D. G.

Foot of the Great Glaciers, at the Mouth of the Athabasca,
May 6th, 1845.

Monseigneur—Provisions becoming scarce at the Fort, at the moment when we had with us a considerable number of Iroquois from the surrounding country, who were resolved to remain until my departure, in order to assist at the instructions, we should have found ourselves in an embarrassing situation had not Mr. Frazer come to our relief, by proposing that we should leave the Fort and accompany himself and family to the Lake of Islands, where we could subsist partly on fish. As the distance was not great, we accepted this invitation, and set out to the number of fifty-four persons, and twenty dogs. I count the latter, because we were as much obliged to provide for them, as for ourselves. A little note of the game killed by our hunters during the twenty-six days of our abode at this place, will perhaps afford you some interest; at least, it will make you acquainted with the animals of the country, and prove that the mountaineers of Athabasca are blessed with good appetites. Animals killed—twelve moose deer, two reindeer, thirty large mountain sheep or big horn, two porcupines, two hundred and ten hares, one beaver, two muskrats, twenty-four bustards, one hundred and fifteen ducks, twenty-one pheasants, one snipe, one eagle, one owl; add to this from thirty to fifty fine white fish every day and twenty trout, and then judge whether or not our people had reason to complain; yet we heard them constantly saying; "How hard living is here? The country is miserably poor—we are obliged to fast."

As the time approached at which I was to leave my new children in Christ, they earnestly begged leave to honor me, before my departure, with a little ceremony to prove their attachment, and that their children might always remember him who had first put them in the way of life. Each one discharged his musket in the direction of the highest mountain, a large rock jutting out in the form of a sugar loaf, and with three loud hurrahs gave it my name.

This mountain is more than 14,000 feet high, and is covered with perpetual snow.

On the 25th April, I bade farewell to my kind friend Mr. Frazer, and his amiable children, who had treated me with every mark of attention and kindness.

All the men in the camp insisted on honoring me with an escort, and accompanied me a distance of ten miles. Here we separated, each one affectionately pressed my hand—mutual good wishes were exchanged—tears flowed on both sides—and I was left with my companions in one of those wild ravines where nothing meets the eye, but ranges of gloomy mountains rising on all sides, like so many impassable barriers.

Upper Athabasca is, unquestionably, the most elevated part of North America. All its mountains are prodigious, and their rocky and snow-capt summits seem to lose themselves in the clouds. At this season, immense masses of snow often become loosened and roll down the mountains' sides with a terrific noise, that resounds throughout these quiet solitudes like distant thunder—so irresistible is the velocity of their descent, that they frequently carry with them enormous fragments of rock, and force a passage through the dense forests which cover the base of the mountain. At each hour, the noise of ten avalanches descending at once, breaks upon the ear; on every side we see them precipitated with a frightful rapidity.

From these mountains, the majestic river of the north, the upper branch of the Sascatshawin, the two great forks of the McKenzie, the Athabasca and Peace rivers, the Columbia, and Frazer at the west, derive the greater part of their waters.

In the neighborhood of the Miette river, we fell in with one of those poor families of Porteurs or "Itoaten," of New Caledonia, of whom I spoke to you in a former letter; they saw us from the summit of the mountain that overlooks the valley through which we were passing, and perceiving we were whites, hastened down to meet us. They appeared overjoyed at seeing us, particularly when they discovered that I was a Black-gown; they crowded around me, and begged me to baptize them with an earnestness that affected me to tears, though I was able to grant this favor to only two of their smallest children, the others required instruction, but there was no interpreter. I exhorted them to return soon to their own country, where they would find a Black-gown (Father Nobili) who would instruct them. They made the sign of the cross, recited some prayers in their own language, and sang several hymns with great apparent devotion. The condition of these people seemed very wretched; they had no clothes but a few rags and some pieces of skins, and yet, notwithstanding their extreme poverty, they laid at my feet the mountain sheep they had just killed.

The history of a poor young woman, one of their number, deserves to be recorded, as it affords a lively picture of the dangers and afflictions to which these unfortunate people are often exposed. When she was about fifteen years of age, her father, mother, and brothers, together with another family of her nation, were surprised in the wood by a party of Assiniboine warriors, and massacred without mercy. At the time of this horrid scene, the young girl was in another part of the forest with her two sisters, both younger than herself; they succeeded in concealing themselves, and thus escaped falling into the hands of the assassins. The hapless orphan wandered about the desert for two years, without meeting any human being, subsisting on roots, wild fruits, and porcupines. In winter she sheltered herself in the abandoned den of a bear. The sisters left her at the end of the first year, since which they have never been heard of. At length, after three years, she was fortunately found by a good Canadian, who took her home, provided her with comfortable food and clothing, and six months after restored her to her tribe.

We resumed our journey the following day, and arrived about nightfall on the banks of the Athabaska, at the spot called the "Great Crossing." Here we deviated from the course of that river, and entered the valley de la Fourche du Trou.

As we approached the highlands the snow became much deeper. On the 1st of May, we reached the great Bature, which has all the appearance of a lake just drained of its waters. Here we pitched our tent to await the arrival of the people from Columbia, who always pass by this route on the way to Canada and York Factory. Not far from the place of our encampment, we found a new object of surprise and admiration. An immense mountain of pure ice, 1,500 feet high, enclosed between two enormous rocks. So great is the transparency of this beautiful ice, that we can easily distinguish objects in it to the depth of more than six feet. One would say, by its appearance, that in some sudden and extraordinary swell of the river, immense icebergs had been forced between these rocks, and had there piled themselves on one another, so as to form this magnificent glacier. What gives some color of probability to this conjecture is, that on the other side of the glacier, there is a large lake of considerable elevation. From the base of this gigantic iceberg, the river Trou takes its rise.

The people of Columbia have just arrived. I must therefore take this present opportunity, the only one I shall have for a long time, of sending you my letters, and before closing this, permit me again to recommend myself and all my missions to your holy sacrifices and fervent prayers.

Meantime, I have the honor to be, with the most sincere respect and esteem, Monseigneur, your very humble and obedient servant in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XVI.

A. M. D. G.

Boat Encampment on the Columbia,
May 10th, 1846.

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial :—By my last letter to the distinguished Prelate of New-York, in which I gave my different missionary excursions during 1845–46 among several tribes of the Rocky Mountains, you have learned that I had arrived at the base of the Great Glacier, the source of the river *du Trou*, which is a tributary of the Athabaska, or Elk river. I will now give to your reverence the continuation of my arduous and difficult journey across the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, and down the Columbia, on my return to my dear brethren in Oregon.

Towards the evening of the 6th of May, we discovered, at the distance of about three miles, the approach of two men in snow shoes, who soon joined us. They proved to be the forerunners of the English Company which, in the spring of each year, go from Fort Vancouver to York Factory, situated at the mouth of the river Nelson, near the fifty-eighth degree north latitude. In the morning my little train was early ready; we proceeded, and after a march of eight miles we fell in with the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company. The time of our reunion was short, but interesting and joyful. The great melting of the snow had already begun, and we were obliged to be on the alert to cross in due time, the now swelling rapids and rivers. The news between travellers, who meet in the mountains is quickly conveyed to one another. The leaders of the company were my old friends, Mr. Ermatinger, of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, and two distinguished officers of the English army, Captains Ward and Vavasseur, whom I had the honor of entertaining last year at the Great Kalispel lake. Capt. Ward is the gentleman who had the kindness to take charge of my letters for the States and for Europe.

Fifteen Indians of the Kettle-Fall tribe accompanied him. Many of them had scaled the mountains with one hundred and fifty pounds weight upon their backs. The worthy Capt.

Ward spoke many things in praise of them[illegible] admired their honesty and civility, and [illegible] their sincere piety and great regularity in their religious duties; every morning and evening, they were seen retiring a short distance from the camp, to sing one or two hymns and join in common prayer. "I hope," added the Captain, "I shall never forget the example which these poor, but good savages, have given me. During the time that they were with me, I was much struck by their becoming [illegible] and I have never seen more sincere piety than they exhibited."

The gentlemen of the English Company were now at the end of their chief difficulties and troubles. They gladly threw away their snow-shoes to take horses for four days; at Fort Jasper they were to enter skiffs, to go to Fort Assiniboine, on the river Athabasca. For myself, I had to try the snow shoes for the first time in my life; by means of them, I had to cross these frightful ramparts, the barriers of snow, which separate the Atlantic world from the Pacific Ocean. I have, in my previous letters, already told you, that this is probably the most elevated point of the Rocky Mountains, whence five great rivers derive their sources.

viz. the north branch of the Saskatchewan, flowing into Lake Winnipeg, the Athabasca and Peace rivers, uniting and flowing into Great Slave Lake, which is discharged into the Northern Ocean by the Mackenzie, the most solitary of rivers. From the bosom of these mountains the Columbia and Fraser rivers derive water from a thousand fountains and streams.

We had now seventy miles to travel in snow shoes, in order to reach the boat encampment on the banks of the Columbia. We proposed to accomplish this in two days and a half. The two worthy and excellent Messrs. Rowand and Harriott, whose kindness at the Rocky Mountain House and Fort Augustus I shall ever acknowledge, were of opinion, that it was absolutely impossible for me to accomplish the journey, on account of my heavy mould, and they wished to dissuade me from attempting it. However, I thought I could remedy the inconvenience of my surplus stock, by a vigorous fast of thirty days, which I cheerfully underwent. I found myself much lighter indeed, and started off somewhat encouraged, over snow sixteen feet deep. We went in single file—alternately ascending and descending—sometimes across plains piled up with avalanches—sometimes over lakes and rapids buried deeply under the snow—now on the side of a steep mountain—then across glades of cypress trees, of which we could only see the tops. I cannot tell you the number of my summersets. I continually found myself embarrassed by my snow shoes, or entangled in some branch of a tree. When falling, I spread my arms before me, as one naturally would do, to break the violence of the fall; and upon deep snow the danger is not great,—though I was often half buried, when I required the assistance of my companions, which was always tendered with great kindness and good humor.

We made thirty miles the first day, and then made preparations to encamp. Some pine trees were cut down and stripped of their branches, and these being laid on the snow, furnished us with a bed, whilst a fire was lighted on a floor of green logs. To sleep thus—under the beautiful canopy of the starry heavens—in the midst of lofty and steep mountains—among sweet murmuring rills and roaring torrents—may appear strange to you, and to all lovers of rooms, rendered comfortable by stoves and feathers; but you may think differently after having come and breathed the pure air of the [illegible], where in future, coughs and colds are unknown. Come and make the trial, and you will say that it is easy to forget the fatigues of a long march, and find contentment and joy even upon the spread branches of pines, on which, after the Indian fashion, we extended ourselves and slept, wrapped up in buffalo robes.

The next morning we commenced the descent of what is called the Great Western Slope. This took us five hours. The whole slope is covered with gigantic cedars, and with pine trees of different species. Wo to the man, who happens to have a heavy body, or to make a false step. I say this from experience; for many times I found myself twenty or thirty feet from the point of my departure—happy indeed if, in the fall, I did not violently strike my head against the trunk of some great tree.

At the foot of the mountain an obstacle of a new kind presented itself. All the barriers of snow, the innumerable banks, which had stopped the power of the streams, lakes, and torrents, were broken up during the night, and swelled considerably the Great Portage river. It meanders so remarkably in this straight valley, down which we travelled for a day and a half, that we were compelled to cross the said river not less than forty times, with the water frequently up to our shoulders. So great is its impetuosity, that we were obliged mutually to support ourselves, to prevent being carried away by the current. We marched in our wet clothes during the rest of our sad route. This long soaking, joined to my great fatigue, swelled my limbs. All the nails of my feet came off, and the blood stained my moccasins or Indian shoes. Four times I found my strength gone, and I should certainly have perished in that frightful region, if the courage and strength of my companions had not roused and aided me in my distress.

We saw May-poles all along the old encampments of the Portage. Each traveller who passes there for the first time, selects his own. A young Canadian, with much kindness, indicated one to me, which was at least one hundred and twenty feet in height, and which reared its lofty head above all the neighboring trees. Did I deserve it? He stripped it of all its branches, only leaving at the top a little crown; at the bottom my name and the date of the transit were written. Moose, reindeer, and mountain goats are frequently found in this region.

We next passed through [illegible] and mountainous forest, where lofty pines lay prostrate by thousands—and where many a giant tree, in its full vigor, had been levelled to the ground by the raging tempest. On issuing from the forest, an extensive march presented itself, through which we had to plod, up to the knees in mud and water; this trouble was trifling compared to the past, and we were still more encouraged at the sight of a beautiful and verdant plain, where four reindeer were seen carousing, bouncing, and jumping in the midst of plenty. No doubt they, as well as ourselves, had issued forth from the snowy and icy cliffs, and felt light-hearted and joyful at the delightful prospect of mountain and plain at this season of the year. On approaching, a dozen guns were at once levelled against the innocent and timid creatures. I was pleased to observe, by the wonderful rapidity with which they used their legs, that no one had injured their noble and beautiful frames.

Towards the middle of the day we arrived at the Boat Encampment, on the bank of the Columbia, at the mouth of the Portage river. Those who have passed the Rocky Mountains at fifty three degrees of north latitude, during the great melting of the snows? Know [illegible] not we merit the title of good travellers? It required all my strength to accomplish it, and I confess that I would not dare undertake it again.

After so many labors and dangers, we [illegible] ed a repast. Happily, we found at the encampment all the ingredients that were necessary for a feast—a bag of flour, a large ham, part of a reindeer, cheese, sugar, and tea in abundance, which the gentlemen of the English Company had charitably left behind. While some were employed refitting the barge, others prepared the dinner; and in about an hour we found ourselves snugly seated and stretched out around the kettles and roasts, laughing and joking about the summersets on the mountains, and the accidents on the Portage. I need not tell you, that they described me as the most clumsy and awkward traveller in the band.

Three beautiful rivers unite at this place: the Columbia, coming from the south-east—the Portage river, from the north-east, and the Canoe river from the north-west. We were surrounded by a great number of magnificent mountains, covered with perpetual snows, and rising from twelve to sixteen thousand feet above the level of the ocean. The Hooker and the Brown are the highest, the latter measuring sixteen thousand feet.

Very Rev. and dear Father Provincial, your humble brother in Jesus Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XVII.

A. M. D. G.

St. Paul's Station, near Colville, }
May, 29th, 18[illegible].

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial,—The Columbia at the Boat Encampment is 3,600 feet above the level of the sea. Having finished our meal, we launched the barge and rapidly descended the river, which was now swollen many feet above its usual level. Did not more serious avocations call him away, an admirer of Nature would willingly linger in a region like this. The volcanic and basaltic islands—the range of picturesque mountains, whose bases came to bathe in the river, whilst their summits seemed to be struggling, in the giant efforts of the avalanche, to throw off the winding-sheet of winter, in order to give place to the new and beautiful verdure of the month of May, with its smiling and varied flowers — the thousand fountains which we could at one view behold, leaping out with soothing music from the shelves of perp[illegible]dering the river—all lent their aid [illegible] the beauty of the scenery of natu[illegible], in this region of the Columbia, seem[illegible] have put forth all her energy to display her grandeur and magnificence.

After some hours of descent we came to Martin's rapid, where a Canadian, so called, together with [illegible] found a watery grave. The fall is precipitous, and the agitation of the water resembles that of a raging sea-storm. The whole bed of the river is here strewed with immense fragments of rocks. Guided by an expert Iroquois pilot, and aided with ten oars, the boat darted over its boisterous surface, dancing like and leaping from wave to wave, with the rapidity of lightning.

At sunset we were at the Dalle of the Dead. (*Dalle* is an old French word, meaning a trough, and the name is given by the Canadian voyageurs to all contracted running waters, hemmed in by walls of rocks.) Here, in 1838, twelve unfortunate travellers were buried in the river. The waters are compressed between a ranges of perpendicular rocks, presenting innumerable crags, fissures and cliffs, through which the Columbia leaps with irrestible impetuosity, forming, as it dashes along, frightful whirlpools, where every passing object is swallowed and disappears. By means of two long ropes we dropped down our boat through the Dalles, and encamped for the night at its outlet.

On the 11th we continued our route at early dawn—the mountain scenery was hidden from our view wrapped up in dense mist [illegible], which were seen ascending in dense pillars, adding to the forming clouds above, till the whole sky was overcast. Occasionally, as if to break upon the unusual monotony, would a fallow or reindeer be observed on the margin of the stream, or peeping with uplifted ears from a thicket, as the strange sound of oars, or the Canadian song, came stealing louder and louder upon them in their quiet abodes—off they bounded, affrighted at the sight of men, so hateful, it appears, to the wild and timid creatures of the forest. In the evening we encamped at the entrance of the Upper Lake.

This beautiful sheet of crystalline water, while the rising sun was tinting the tops of a thousand hills around, came most refreshing to the eye. It is about thirty miles long, by four or five wide. Its borders are embellished by overhanging precipices and majestic peaks, which, rearing their white heads above the clouds, look down like venerable monarchs of the desert upon the great forests of pines and cedar surrounding the lake. The two highest peaks are called St. Peter and St. Paul.

Twenty Indian families, belonging to the station of St. Peter, were found encamped on the borders of the lake. I gladly accepted their invitation to visit them. It was the meeting of a father with his children, after ten months of absence and dangers. I dare say the joy was mutually sincere. The greater part of the tribe had been converted during the past year, at Kettle Falls. These families were absent at that time. I passed, therefore, several days among them, to instruct them in the duties and practices of religion. They then received baptism, with all the marks of sincere piety and gratitude. Gregory, the name of their chief, who had not ceased to exhort his people by word and example, had the happiness to receive baptism in 1838, from the hands of the Rev. Mr., now Archbishop, Blanchet. The worthy and respectable chief was now at the height of his joy, in seeing at last all his children brought under the standard of Jesus Christ. The tribe of these lake Indians are a part of the Kettle

Fall nation. They are very poor, and subsist principally on fish and wild roots. As soon as we shall have more means at our disposal, we will supply them with implements of husbandry and with various seeds and roots, which I have no doubt, will thrive well in their country; this will be a great assistance to these destitute people. The second lake is about six miles distant from the first. It is of about the same length, but less wide. We passed under a perpendicular rock, where we beheld an innumerable number of arrows sticking out of the fissures. The Indians, when they ascend the lake, have a custom of lodging each an arrow into these crevices. The origin and cause of the custom is unknown to me.

The mouth of the river McGilvray or Flat-Bow, is near the outlet of the Lower Lake. It presents a beautiful situation for the establishment of a future Reduction or Mission, and I have already marked out a site for the construction of a church. About twenty miles lower, we passed the Flat-Head or Clark's river, which contributes largely to the Columbia. These two beautiful rivers derive a great portion of their waters from the same chain of the Rocky Mountains, from which a great number of the forks of the south branch of the Sascatshawin and of the Missouri are supplied. For a distance of about thirty miles from their junction with the Columbia, are they obstructed by insurmountable falls and rapids. Among the many lakes connected with the Flat-Head river, three are very conspicuous, and measure from thirty to forty miles in length, and from four to six in width. The Flat-Head lake receives a broad and beautiful stream, extending upwards of a hundred miles in a north-western direction, through a most delightful valley, and is supplied by considerable torrents, coming from a great cluster of mountains, connected immediately with the main chain, in which a great number of lakes lie imbedded. Clark's fork passed through Lake Kalispel. Lake Roothaan is situated in the Pend-d'oreille and Flat-Bow mountains, and discharges itself by the Black-gown river into the Clark, twenty miles below the Kalispel Lake. The St. Mary's, or Bitter-root river, from the south-east, is the greatest tributary of Clark's fork, and the chief residence of the Flat-Heads. All these waters contain an abundance of fish, especially trout. The geography of the head of Clark's Fork, is little known, as appears from the maps, the [illegible] east branch on the Saint Mary's river being only a small tributary compared to the main stream, coming from the north-west, and passing through the great Flat-Head lake.

Our barge was in great danger in the Dalle, some miles above Colville. I had left it, to go on foot, to avoid the dangerous passage. The young boatmen, notwithstanding my remonstrances, thought they could pass in safety. A whirlpool suddenly arrested their course, and threatened to bury them beneath its angry waters. Their redoubled efforts proved ineffectual—I saw them borne on with an irresistible force to the engulfing centre—the bow of the boat descended already into the abyss and filled! I was on my knees upon the rock which overhung this frightful spectacle, surrounded by several Indians—we implored the aid of Heaven in favor of our poor comrades—they seemed to be evidently lost—when the whirlpool filled, and threw them from its bosom, as if reluctantly yielding up the prey which it had so tenaciously held. We all gave heartfelt thanks to Almighty God for having delivered them from a danger so imminent.

From the outlet of the Lower Lake of the Columbia to Fort Colville, the aspect of the country is highly picturesque and interesting. The whole section, on both sides of the river, is well supplied with rivulets and streams. The soil is rather light, but it affords fine grazing; the mountains are not high—the forests are open—the bottom lands present here and there beautiful groves—the surface of the soil yields an abundant and luxuriant grass.

Towards the end of the month of May I arrived at Fort Colville. I found the nation of Shuyelphi or Kettle Fall already baptized by the Rev. Father Hoecken, who had continued to instruct them after my departure in the month of August of last year. They had built, to my great surprise, a small frame church, so much the more beautiful and agreeable to my eyes, as being their first attempt at architecture, and the exclusive work of the Indians. With a laudable pride they conducted me, as in triumph, to the humble and new temple of the Lord, and in favor of that good people, and for their perseverance in the faith, I there offered the august Sacrifice of the Altar.

The arrival of the good Father Nobili at Colville filled us with great joy and consolation. He had made missionary excursions over the greatest portion of New Caledonia. Everywhere the Indian tribes received him with open arms, and took great care to bring their little children to be baptized. I add to this an extract from his letter, which will give you an outline of his journey and the number of baptisms he performed. Having made a retreat of eight days in the Reduction of St. Ignatius, and after a month of repose and preparation for a second expedition, he returned with renewed zeal and fervor to his dear Caledonians, accompanied by several laborers, and supplied with a dozen horses, loaded with implements of agriculture and carpentry.

As a token of my sincere gratitude, and to let you know that we have friends and benefactors in Oregon, I must here state to your Reverence, that Father Nobili and myself were most hospitably entertained during our stay at Fort Colville. The kindness of the Honorable Mr. Lewes and family I shall never forget. The attention shown Father Nobili, in the trading posts of New Caledonia is beyond all praise. Truly and deservedly has Commodore Wilkes stated, "That the liberality and hospitality of all the gentlemen of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company are proverbial." Indeed, we experience this and participate of it on all occasions.

I remain, with profound respect and esteem, Very Rev. and dear Father, your humble and obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XVIII.

A. M. D. G.

EXTRACT FROM FATHER NOBILI'S LETTER.

Fort Colville, June 1st, 1846.

Rev. Father,—While I remained at Fort Vancouver, I baptized upwards of sixty persons, during a dangerous sickness which raged in the country. The majority of those who received baptism, died with all the marks of sincere conversion. On the 27th of July, I baptized nine children at Fort Okinagane—the children of the chief of the Sioushwaps were of the number. He appeared full of joy at seeing a *Black-gown* direct his course towards their country. On the 29th I left Okinagane, and followed the company. Every night I prayed with the whites and Indians. On the road three old men came to me, and earnestly begged me to "*take pity on them, and prepare them for heaven!*" Having instructed them in the duties and principles of religion, and the necessity of baptism, I administered to them, and to forty-six children of the same tribe, what seemed to be the height of their desires, the holy Sacrament of regeneration.

On the 11th of August, a tribe of Indians, residing about the Upper Lake on Thompson's River, came to meet me. They exhibited towards me all the marks of sincere and filial attachment. They followed me several days to hear my instructions, and *only departed* after having exacted a promise that I would return in the course of the following autumn or winter, and make known to them the glad tidings of salvation.

At the Fort of the Sioushwaps, I received a visit from all the chiefs, who congratulated me on my happy arrival amongst them. They raised a great cabin to serve as a church, and as a place to teach them during my stay. I baptized twelve of their children. I was obliged, when the Salmon fishing commenced, to separate for some months from these dear Indians, and continue my route to New Caledonia.

I arrived at Fort Alexandria on the 25th. All the tribes I met manifested towards me the same emotions of joy and friendship. To my surprise I found at the Fort a frame church. I returned in the fall and remained there a month, engaged in all the exercises of our holy ministry. The Canadians performed their religious duties—I joined several in marriage, and administered to many the Holy Communion. Twenty-four children and forty-seven adults received baptism.

On the 2d of September, I ascended the river Frazer, and after a dangerous trip, arrived, on the 12th, at Fort George; where the same joy and affection on the part of the Indians attended me. Fifty Indians had come down from the Rocky Mountains, and patiently awaited my arrival for nineteen days, in order to have the consolation of witnessing the ceremony of baptism. I baptized twelve of their children, and twenty-seven others, of whom six were adults advanced in age. I performed there the ceremonies of the planting of the Cross.

On the 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, I ascended the river Nesqually, and on the 24th, arrived at the Fort of Lake Stuart. I spent eleven days in giving instructions to the Indians, and had the happiness of abolishing the custom of burning the dead, and that of inflicting torments upon the bodies of the surviving wives or husbands. They solemnly renounced all their juggling and idolatries. Their great medicine-hall, where they used to practise their superstitious rites, was changed into a church. It was blessed and dedicated to God under the patronage of St. Francis Xavier. The planting of the Cross was solemnly performed with all the ceremonies proper to such occasions. Sixteen children and five old men received baptism.

The 24th Oct., I visited the village of the Chileotins. This mission lasted twelve days, during which time I baptized eighteen children and twenty-four adults, and performed eight marriages. I blessed here the first cemetery, and buried, with all the ceremonies of the ritual, an Indian woman, the first converted to Christianity. I next visited two other villages of the same tribe—in the first I baptized twenty persons, of whom three were adults. In the second, two chiefs with thirty of their nation received baptism, and two were united in matrimony. Poligamy prevailed everywhere, and everywhere I succeeded in abolishing it. In a neighboring tribe I baptized fifty-seven persons, of whom thirty-one were adults. I also celebrated nine marriages. After my return to the Shushwaps, I baptized forty-one persons, of whom eleven were adults. I visited five more villages among the neighboring tribes, amongst whom I baptized about two hundred persons. I performed the ceremony of the planting of the Cross, in eight different places, and founded four frame churches which were constructed by the savages.

On an average, each village or tribe consists of about two hundred souls.

In the neighborhood of Fort Alexandria the number of souls amounts to	1255
About Fort George,	343
In the neighborhood of Frazer's Lake,	[illegible]
" " Stuart's Lake,	211
" " McLeod's Lake,	[illegible]
" " Fort Rabine,	1190
" " Bear Lake,	[illegible]
Total number of souls,	[illegible]

Population on Thompson's river, or on the land of the Sioushwaps or Atnaas.

The number of Sioushwaps, so called, is	[illegible]
" of Okinaganes,	635
Population on the North Branch,	[illegible]
" on Lake Superior,	[illegible]
" at the Fountain of Frazer Lake,	1127
Number of Knife Indians,	[illegible]
Total number of souls,	[illegible]

I remain, reverend Father, yours, &c.,

J. NOBILI, S. J.

No. XIX.

A. M. D. G.

Fort Walla-Walla,
July 18th, 1846.

VERY REV. AND DEAR FATHER PROVINCIAL,—I accepted the kind offer of Mr. Lewes, and took my seat in one of the barges of the Hudson Bay Company, on its way to Fort Vancouver. We stopped at Fort Okinagane, where I administered baptism to forty-three persons, chiefly children. Our passage was very pleasant and agreeable. I have little to add to what I have already stated in my preceding letters of last year, respecting our residence at Saint Francis Xavier's, and the other Catholic establishments in the Willamette Valley and vicinity. St. James' Church at Vancouver, St. John's in Oregon City, St. Mary's at the Convent, and St. Francis Xavier's chapel have all been opened for divine service. The new church among the Canadians, and the Cathedral, were fast progressing. The number of children in the Sisters' school had greatly increased, and a change for the better already taken place among the little [illegible] girls confided to their care. Sister Loyola, the Superior, appeared delighted with their present conduct. Two Protestant families, among the most respectable in Oregon, Dr. Long and lady and Judge Burnet and family, were received into the bosom of the Catholic Church, in Oregon City. Archbishop Blanchet and companions were anxiously expected; may the Lord speed them, and grant them a happy passage on the boisterous ocean—a route which, it appears, they have selected in order to reach their destined new homes. O, how large is the vineyard!—the Island of Vancouver alone contains upwards of twenty thousand Indians, ready to receive our missionaries—and an extensive field awaits the laborers, among the numerous nations of the north-west coast. The visits paid to these various tribes, by the *Black-gowns*, and the affection and kindness with which they are received by the Indians, leave little doubt of the ultimate success of their holy enterprise.

In order to return to the upper Missions, I started in the beginning of July, from Fort Vancouver, two days after the brigade of the Hudson Bay Company had left it. An [illegible]

[illegible] fortunately not attended with such serious consequences, here occurred to me. A powder-horn exploded near me accidentally, scorching me severely, and completely stripping the skin from my nose, cheeks and lips—leaving me to all appearance, after all my travels, a raw-faced mountaineer. I procured an Indian canoe, well-mounted, and soon found myself during a thunder storm, in the great gap of the Cascade Mountains, through which the mighty Columbia winds its way. The sublime and the romantic appear to have made a grand effort for a magnificent display in this spot. On both sides of the stream perpendicular walls of rock rise in majestic boldness—small rills and rivulets, innumerable crystalline streams pursue their way; murmuring down on the steep declivities, they rush and leap from cascade to cascade, after a thousand gambols, adding, at last, their foaming tribute to the turbulent and powerful stream. The imposing mass of waters has here forced its way between a chain of volcanic, towering mountains, advancing headlong with an irresistible impetuosity, over rocky reefs, and prostrate ruins, for a distance of about four miles; forming the dangerous, and indeed the most remarkable obstruction—the great cascades of the Columbia. There is an interesting, and very plausible Indian account of the formation of these far-famed cascades, on which so much has been said and written, so many conjectures regarding earth-slides, sinkings, or swells, caused by subterraneous volcanic agents. "Our grandfathers," said an Indian to me, "remember the time when the waters passed here quietly, and without obstruction, under a long range of towering and projecting rocks, which, unable to bear their weight any longer, crumbled down, thus stopping up and raising the bed of the river; here it overflowed the great forests of cedar and pine, which are still to be seen above the cascades." Indeed, the traveller beholds with astonishment, a great number of huge trunks of trees, still standing upright in water about twenty feet deep. No person, in my opinion, can from a just idea of the cause that produced these remarkable changes, without admitting the Indian narrative.

My baggage was soon conveyed to the upper end of the portage. The distance from the cascades to the dalles is about forty-five miles, and is without any obstacle. The mountain scenery on both sides of the river, with [illegible]

[illegible] of shrubs, cedars, and pines, is truly delightful, heightened occasionally by the sight of the snow-capped Mounts Hood and St. Helens. A favorable breeze made us unfurl two blankets for the want of sails, and as we were gliding rapidly up the stream, we observed several islands of volcanic formation, where the Indians deposit their dead on scaffolds, or in little huts made of pieces of split cedar, frequently covered with mats and boards; great care is taken to hinder birds of prey, or the rapacious wolves, with their hyena stomachs and plundering propensities, from breaking in upon the abode of the dead.

The third day we arrived at the great dalles. Indians flock thither from different quarters of the interior, to attend, at this season of the year, to the salmon fisheries. This is their glorious time for rejoicing, gambling, and feasting; the long fast is passed; they have at last assembled in the midst of abundance—all that the eye can see, or the nose smell, is fish, and nothing but fish. Piles of them are lying everywhere on the rocks, the Indian huts abound with them, and the dogs are dragging and fighting over the offal in all directions. Not less than eight hundred Indians were present on this occasion.

One who has seen them five years ago, poor and almost naked, and who beholds then now, discovers with a peculiar feeling of humor and delight, the entire change in their external appearance, a complete metamorphosis, as Ovid would say. Their dresses are of the most grotesque character, regardless alike of their appropriateness to sex or condition of life. A masquerade character, as we understand it, will at least exhibit unity of design; but this Indian masquerade sets all unities at defiance. A stout, swarthy Indian, steps proudly by you, apparently conscious of the dignity conferred on him by his new acquisitions—a roundabout much too small for him, a pair of tights with straps, with an intervening space showing the absence of linen, form his body dress, while an old fashioned lady's night-cap with large frills, and if he be rich enough, a sailor's glazed cap carefully balanced above it, constitute his head dress; a pair, and sometimes half a pair of brogans, complete the ludicrous appearance of this Indian dandy. Some appear parading thro' the camp in the full dress of a wagoner, others in a mixture composed of the sailor's, the wagoner's, and the lawyer's, arranged according to fancy; but the favorite article of ornamental dress appears to be the night-cap with its large frills; some again with only one article of dress. I have seen an old Indian showing off a pair of boots to the best advantage, as they formed the only article of his wardrobe then on his person. Indian squaws are seen attired in long calico gowns, little improved by the copious addition of fish oil, with which the taste or negligence of the present owners besmeared them; occasionally, if they can afford it, to this is superadded a vest, a flannel or great-coat. The dalles at present, form a kind of masquerading thoroughfare, where emigrants and Indians meet, it appears, for the purpose of affording mutual aid. When the Oregon emigrants arrive here, they are generally in want of provisions, horses, canoes, and guides—these wants the Indians supply, receiving in exchange the old travelling clothes of the doctors, lawyers, farmers, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, &c., that pass through the dalles on their westward route. Hence the motley collection of pants, coats, boots, of every form and size, comforters, caps and hats of every fashion.

Here I overtook Messrs. Lewes and Manson, who kindly offered me a place in one of the barges of the Company, which I gladly accepted —the transportation of their boats and goods had taken up a whole day. From the great dalles to the upper sources of the Columbia, great care and attention are to be had in its navigation, for it presents a constant succession of rapids, falls, cascades, and dalles. Men of great experience are here employed as pilots, and notwithstanding their skill and precaution, no river probably on the globe, frequented as much, could tell of more disastrous accidents.

At the dalles you enter a barren region, where drift wood is brought into every encampment by the Indians, for which they gladly receive a piece of tobacco in return. In the absence of the savages, the tombs of the dead are sometimes shamefully pillaged by civilized *Christian* travellers, taking away the very boards that cover the dead bodies, and thus leave them the prey of vultures and crows.

Indians linger on the Columbia as long as the salmon can be caught. Unconscious of the approaching winter, they do not lay in sufficient stock of provisions, and till late in the fall they may be seen picking up the dead and dying fishes which float in great numbers on the surface. In the immediate neighborhood of a camp the air is infected with the scent of salmon in a state of putrefaction; they are suspended on trees, or on scaffolds, and to this unwholesome and detestable food has the improvident Indian recourse, when the days of his long lent commence.

You can scarcely form an idea of the deplorable condition of the poor petty tribes, scattered along the banks of the Columbia, of which the numbers visibly diminish from year to year. Imagine their dwellings, a few poor huts, constructed of rush, bark, bushes, or of pine branches, sometimes covered with skins or rags—around these miserable habitations lie scattered in profusion the bones of animals, and the offal of fishes of every tribe, amidst accumulated filth of every description. In the interior, you find roots piled up in a corner, skins hanging from cross poles, and fish boiling over the fire, a few dying embers; an axe to cut wood being seldom found among them. The whole stock of kitchen utensils, drinking vessels, dishes, etc., are comprised in something like a fish-kettle, made of osier, and besmeared with gum—to boil this kettle stones are heated red hot and thrown into it. But the mess cooked in this way, can you guess what it is? No, not in twenty trials—it is impossible to divine what the ingredients are that compose this [illegible] soup!

But to pass from the *material* to the *personal*; what strange figures! faces thickly covered with grease and dirt—heads that have never felt a comb—hands! but such hands! a veritable pair of "jack of all trades," fulfilling in rapid succession, the varied functions of the comb, the pocket-handkerchief, the knife, fork, and spoon—while eating, the process is loudly indicated by the crackling and discordant sounds that issue from the nose, mouth, throat, etc., a sight, the bare recollection of which is enough to sicken any person. Thus you can form some idea of their personal miseries—miseries, alas! that faintly image another [illegible] infinitely more saddening; for what shall I say in attempting to describe their moral condition? There prevails among the greater part of them, a kind of superstitious idolatry, (called medicine or juggling), that pays homage to the vilest animals; a degeneracy of morals which knows no stronger tie in conjugal obligations, than the caprice of the moment—a vehement, inordinate passion for gambling, that is prolonged to the time of repose—a laziness which nothing can induce them to shake off but the love of play.

[illegible] the pressing claim of hunger—they are in fine, addicted to the vilest habits of gluttony, dissimulation, etc. Such is the wretched condition of the poor savage tribes along the Columbia. But amidst all this misery, there is fortunately one redeeming feature, a constant desire to discover some power superior to man; this disposition renders them attentive to the least word that seems to convey the slightest knowledge of a Supreme Being, and hence the facility with which they believe anything that at all resembles the Word of God.

Very reverend and dear Father, your humble and obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XX

A. M. D. G.

St. Ignatius, near the Kalispel Bay,
July 26th, 1[illegible].

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial,—On the eighth day after my departure from Fort Vancouver, I landed safely at Walla Walla, with the goods destined for the different missions. In a few days all was ready, and having thanked the good and kind-hearted Mr. McBride, the Superintendent of the Fort, who had rendered me every assistance in his power, we again found ourselves on the way to the mountains, leading a band of pack mules and horses over a sandy dry plain, covered with bunch grass and wormwood. We made about sixteen miles, and camped for the night, in a beautiful little meadow, watered by the Walla Walla river, where we found abundance of grass for our animals—these were soon unloaded and left free to graze.

at leisure; we next made a fire, put on the camp-kettle, stretched the bed, consisting of a buffalo-robe, and smoked together the friendly Indian pipe, whilst supper was preparing. We found ourselves at home and perfectly at ease in less than a quarter of an hour. The evening was clear and beautiful—not a cloud—our sleep, sound and refreshing, prepared us for an early start at dawn of day. We had a day's march, with pack animals, over an undulating plain, before we could reach the crossing of the Nez-percé or Lewis fork, whose source is in the angle of the Rocky and Snowy Mountains, between the 42d and 44th degrees, near the sources of the western Rio Colorado, the Platte, the Yellow Stone, and the Missouri rivers; its western course till it reaches the Blue Mountains, and hence its northern direction till it joins the Columbia, together with its principal tributaries, are sufficiently known to you, and have been amply described already.

We found about a dozen Indian lodges called the Palooses, a portion of the Sapetan or Nez-percés. We procured from the Indians here some fresh salmon, for which we made them ample return in powder and lead. But as the grass was withered and scanty, and the pilfering dispositions of these Indians rather doubtful, we resolved on proceeding eight or ten miles farther, and encamped late in the evening on the Pavilion river. The Nez-percé and Spokane plain is at least a thousand feet elevated above the bed of the river. It is dry, stony, undulating, covered with bunch and nutritious grass, with prickly pear and wormwood. The basaltic and volcanic formations which extend through the whole of this region, are really wonderful. We frequently passed ponds and small lakes embedded between walls of basaltic rocks—immense ranges of dark shining pillars, as if forced from the bosom of the plain, extend for some miles, resembling, not unfrequently, forts and ancient ruined cities and castles. We encamped several times near small but beautiful lakes, where ducks and geese, with their young broods, were swimming in great numbers. The Indians frequent these regions in search of the bitter and camash roots, very abundant here. In every one of their old encampments we observed great quantities of prairie-turtle shells, a proof of their being numerous and serving as food for the savages. Pheasants or quails were very abundant — we daily killed what we wanted for our meals.

On the fifth day of our departure from Walla Walla, we reached the Spokane river, and found a good fording for our animals. You will see with pleasure the chart I have made of the head waters of this river, which, though beautiful and interesting, is yet, like all the other rivers in Oregon, almost an unbroken succession of rapids, falls, and cascades, and of course ill-adapted in its present condition to the purposes of navigation. The two upper valleys of the Cœur d'Alene are beautiful, and of a rich mould; they are watered by two deep forks, running into the Cœur d'Alene lake, a fine sheet of water, of about thirty miles in length by four or five broad, from which the river Spokane derives its source. I called the two upper forks the St. Joseph's and the St. Ignatius. They are formed by innumerable torrents, descending from the Pointed-Heart mountains, a chain of the Rocky Mountains. The two upper valleys are about sixty or eighty miles long, and four or eight miles broad. I counted upwards of forty little lakes in them. The whole neighborhood of the Spokane river affords very abundant grazing, and in many sections is tolerably well timbered with pines of different species.

On leaving the river we ascended by a steep Indian path. A few miles' ride across a pine forest brings you to a beautiful valley, leading to Colville, agreeably diversified by plains and forests, hemmed in by high wooded mountains, and by huge picturesque rocks towering their lofty heads over all the rest. Fountains and rivulets are here very numerous. After about thirty miles, we arrived at the foot of the Kalispel Mountain, in the neighborhood of St. Francis Regis, where already about seventy metis or half-breeds have collected to settle permanently. Several of them accompanied me across the mountain, the height of which is about five thousand feet above the level of the plain. Its access is very easy on the western side; on the eastern, the narrow path winds its snake-like course through a steep and dense forest.—After a march of about eight hours we arrived at the beautiful Kalispel Bay, on the margin of lake De Boey, almost in sight of the *Reduction* of St. Ignatius.—My letter to Mrs. P., which I insert here will make you acquainted with the whole history of that mission.

I remain, with the profoundest [illegible] esteem, Very Rev. Father Provincial, your humble and obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

A. M. D. G.

St. Ignatius, July 25th, 1846.

MADAM,—I am, indeed, ashamed at not having been able sooner to answer the letters which you had the kindness to write me on the 2d of September and the 7th of December, 1844. They reached the Rocky Mountains only the year after, while I was engaged in a distant mission among the Indians, so that I received them only in the month of July, 1846. If it had been in my power to forward you an answer before this moment, my heart assures me that I would have done it without delay, for I must tell you here, that the debt of gratitude which my poor Indians and myself owe you is very great; and I felt impatient to inform you, that we have already begun to pray for you, for your dear and amiable children, and for your intentions. I have given directions to the Indians of these different tribes, viz., the Flatheads, the Pends d'Oreilles, and the Cœur d'Alenes, to recite, every week, the Rosary for one of their great benefactresses, meaning yourself. Now, you cannot but be aware, that, among the Indians, the beads are recited in each family, so that I am already assured, and I have the consolation of saying to you, that many thousand pairs of beads have already been offered up to God and his august mother for you. Those good Indians—those children of the forest—so dear to my heart, will continue to display their gratitude till I tell them to cease, and that will not be very soon. What confidence have I not in the prayers of those Indians, whose merit is known only to God! Oh! if it is true that the prayer of him who possesses the innocence, the simplicity, and the faith of a child, pierces the clouds—is all-powerful, and is certainly heard—then be assured that in these new missions, in which the finger of God has been so visibly manifested, these virtues reign pre-eminently, and that the prayer of the Indian will also be heard in your behalf! How happy should I be, my dear, excellent Madam, could I give you to understand how great, how sweet, how enrapturing is their devotion to the august mother of God! The name of Mary, which pronounced in the Indian language, is something so sweet and endearing, delights and charms them. The hearts of these good children of the forest melt, and seem to overflow, when they sing the praises of her whom they, as well as we, call their mother. Oh! I feel confident, knowing, as I do, their dispositions, that they have a distinguished place in the heart of that Holy Virgin; and that, through the intercession of Mary, invoked by so many fervent souls, you will obtain from God whatever you ask; for I am too well acquainted with your piety to think that you would ask anything that was not calculated to promote the glory of God, the sanctification of your own soul, and that of your children.

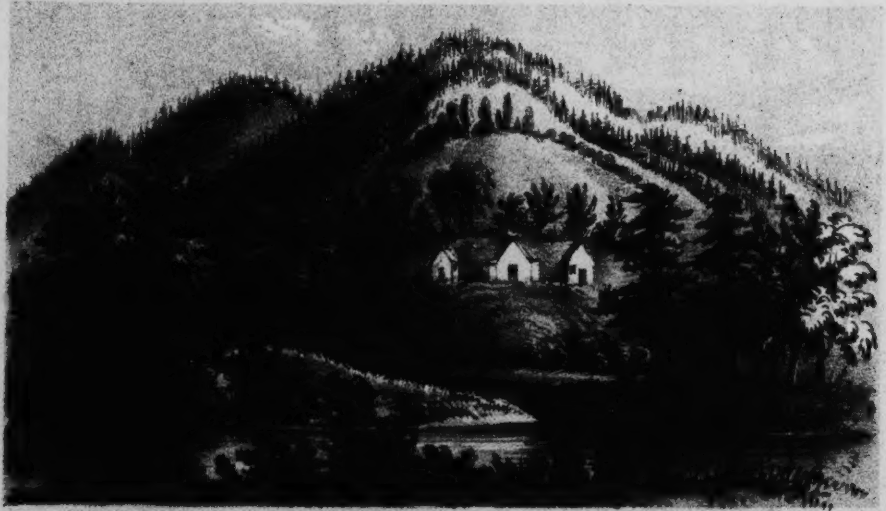
Permit me, now, to say a few words concerning the Indians and myself, since the time I had the honor of conversing with you in B——, in the spring of 1843. On the 6th of November of the following year, the Rev. Father A. Hoecken came to meet me, accompanied by several Indians of the tribe of Pends d'Oreilles of the Bay, among whom I had determined, two years before, to open a mission. They displayed every mark of friendship and joy at my return among them; they conducted me in triumph to their camp, and received me there amidst volleys of musketry and the sounding of trumpets. It would be impossible to describe the feelings of my heart at thus meeting with the first band of my dear neophytes and children in God, and to represent to you the real joy which animated them on this occasion. How much had we not to communicate to each other! I gave them some little and to them interesting details of the vast countries through which I had travelled in order to promote the interest and welfare of the Indians, since I bade them farewell, that is, within fifteen months. I had crossed the great American desert, and passed through so many warlike, nomadical nations, extending from the Pacific Ocean to the frontier of the the State of Missouri. I had travelled over the United States from New Orleans to Boston—crossed the Atlantic—seen a great part of Ireland and England—the whole of Belgium, Holland and France. From Marseilles I had passed by Genoa, the city of palaces, Leghorn, and Civitta Vecchia, to visit the Capital of the Christian world. From Rome I had gone to Anvers, and then, sailing round Cape Horn, touching at Chili and Peru, and having twice crossed the Equator, I had at length disembarked at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia, and had the happiness to embrace, on the 6th of November, my dear neophytes, who had prayed so fervently for me, that, during all these long voyages, by sea and land, passing through so many different climates, and at all seasons of the year, I had not been troubled either by sickness or any untoward accident. Glory to God for so special a protection, and a thousand thanks to the good Indians who, from the moment of my departure until my return, had not ceased to invoke, morning and evening, the blessing and assistance of Heaven on its unworthy servant.

The details which the young missionary gave me respecting their present dispositions, are too interesting to be here omitted; and I give them in proof of the divine grace over the hearts of this well-disposed people. All that I had recommended to them in the visits I paid them in 1841–42, had been strictly complied with. "The first thing," says Father Adrien Hoecken in a letter home, "which struck me on my arrival among them, was a truly brotherly love and perfect union, which animated the whole tribe, and seemed to make them but one family. They manifest great love, obedience and respect for their chiefs, and what is still more admirable, they all, as the chiefs themselves declare, speak and desire but one and the same thing. These chiefs are as much the real fathers of their people as is a good Superior the father of a religious community. The chiefs among the Kalispels speak calmly, but never in vain; the instant they intimate their wish to one of their followers, he sets to work to accomplish it. Is any one involved in difficulties—is he in want or sickness,—or does he wish to undertake a journey, whether long or short—he consults his chief, and shapes his conduct in accordance with the advice he receives. Even with regard to marriage, the Indians consult their chiefs, who sanction, or postpone it, or disapprove of it, according as they deem it conducive, or otherwise, to the happiness of the parties. The chief, in quality of father, endeavors to provide for the support of his people. It is he, consequently, who regulates hunting, fishing, and the gathering of roots and fruit. All the game and fish are brought to his lodge, and divided into as many shares as there are families. The distribution is made with rigid impartiality. The old, the infirm, the widow, all receive their share equally with the hunter. Is not this something like the return of the golden age—those happy times when every thing was held in common and all had, as the apostle informs us, but one heart and one soul? Complaints, murmurings and backbiting are here unknown; blasphemy has never been uttered by an Indian: there are not even words in his language to express it." On the arrival of the *Black-gown*, the great chiefs explained to him, with patriarchal simplicity, their manner of life. "We are ignorant," he added, "but now that we have the happiness to have a *Black-gown* among us, we will listen to his voice and obey it; whatever changes he may deem necessary to make, we will cheerfully submit."

The *Black-gown* confirmed and approved all the good practices and customs he found established in this little corner of the world, where, notwithstanding their poverty, the Indians all seemed contented and happy. It is really affecting to hear them speak of the darkness in which they had been buried; and to see them now walking in the light of the gospel, and the knowledge of the Christian virtues, which they [illegible] by which their hearts seem to be [illegible] whose ambition consists in [illegible] ing with docility to the word of God, and in being able thoroughly to understand and recite their prayers. Piety is what a young man seeks in her who is to be his future wife—and what a young woman desires to find in him who is to become her husband. In their leisure hours they surround, and, if I may be allowed the expression, besiege their missionary. To the day they would add the night, if he could bear the fatigue, in speaking of heavenly things. Pride and human respect, are absolutely unknown to them. How often have we not seen gray-headed old men and even chiefs, sit down by the side of children ten or eleven years old, who would teach them their prayers, and explain to them the figures of the *Catholic Ladder*, with all the gravity becoming a teacher; and give to the explanation, for one or two hours, all the attention of obedient pupils. In seasons of scarcity, when the fishing or hunting has failed, or in other misfortunes, they manifest no signs of impatience. They are quiet and resigned, receiving them as punishments for their sins; while their success they attribute to the bounty of God, and render to Him all the glory of it.

The usual place of residence of the Kalispels [illegible] the *Reduction of St.* [illegible] now established—is an extensive prairie, called the Bay of the Kalispels, thirty or forty miles above the mouth of Clark or Flat-Head River. A beautiful grotto exists in the neighborhood of the mission, which I have named the grotto of Manresa, in honor of our Holy Founder. It is very large, and might, at a small expense, be fitted up for a church. May the Indians gather in crowds into this new Manresa, and after the example of their patron, St. Ignatius, be penetrated with a feeling sense of heavenly things, and inflamed with the love of God!

I shall always remember with pleasure the winter of 1844–45, which I had the happiness of spending among these good Indians. The place for wintering was well chosen, picturesque, agreeable, and convenient. The camp was placed near a beautiful waterfall, caused by Clark river's being blocked up by an immense rock, through which the waters, forcing narrow passages, precipitate themselves. A dense and interminable forest protected us from the north winds, and a countless number of dead trees standing on all sides, furnished us with abundant fuel for our fires during the inclement season. We were encircled by ranges of lofty mountains, whose snow-clad summits reflected



MISSION OF St IGNATIUS AT KALISPEL BAY, AMONG THE PENDS D'OREILLES (See Letter 5th.)

in the sun, their brightness on all the surrounding country.

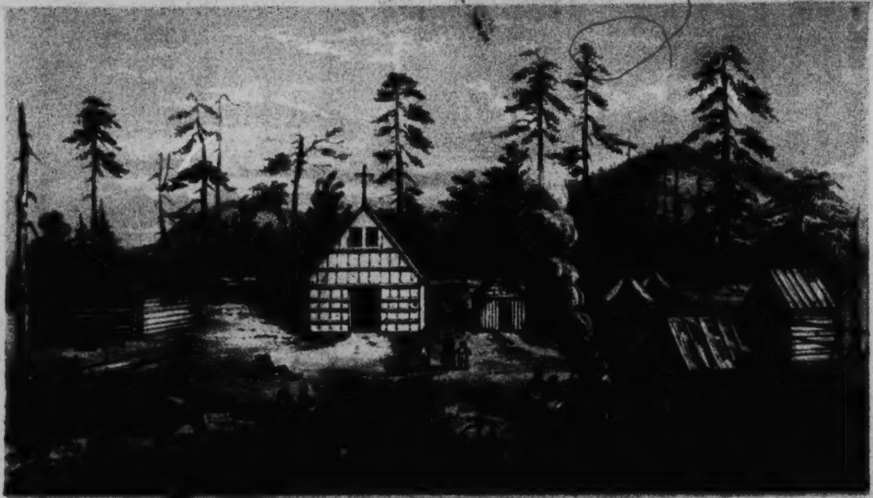
The place for wintering being determined, the first care of the Indians was to erect the house of prayer. While the men cut down saplings, the women brought bark and mats to cover them. In two days this humble house of the Lord was completed—humble and poor indeed, but truly the *house of prayer*, to which pure, simple, innocent souls repaired, to offer to the Great Spirit their vows, and the tribute of their affections. Here the missionaries continued with care and diligence, their instructions preparatory to baptism. How consoling was it to see ourselves surrounded by this fervent band, who had renounced the chase of the buffalo—a pleasure so attracting to an Indian—and had come from various parts of the country to place themselves under our direction, in the well-founded hope of being speedily regenerated in the saving waters of baptism. They had already learned their prayers, and all those things which it was necessary they should practise. They applied with ardor to become acquainted with the nature and obligations of the Sacrament of regeneration, and the dispositions required for its worthy reception.

The great festival of Christmas, the day on which the little band was to be added to the number of the true children of God, will never be effaced from the memory of our good Indians. The manner in which we celebrated midnight mass, may give you an idea of our festival. The signal for rising, which was to be given a few minutes before midnight, was the firing of a pistol, announcing to the Indians that the house of prayer would soon be open. This was followed by a general discharge of guns, in honor of the birth of the Infant Saviour, and three hundred voices rose spontaneously from the midst of the forest, and entoned in the language of the Pends d'Oreilles, the beautiful canticle: "*Du Dieu puissant tout annonce la gloire.*"—"The Almighty's glory all things proclaim." In a moment a multitude of adorers were seen wending their way to the humble temple of the Lord—resembling indeed, the manger in which the Messiah was born. On that night, which all at once became bright as day, they experienced, I know not what, that which made them exclaim aloud, "Oh God! I give Thee my heart." Oh! I trust that the happy impression which this unwonted spectacle made upon their hearts, will never be effaced. Of what was our little church of the wilderness constructed? I have already told you—of posts fresh cut in the woods, covered over with mats and bark; these were its only materials. On the eve, the church was embellished with garlands and wreaths of green boughs; forming, as it were, a frame for the images which represent the affecting mysteries of Christmas night. The interior was ornamented with pine branches. The altar was neatly decorated, bespangled with stars of various brightness, and covered with a profusion of ribbons—things exceedingly attractive to the eye of an Indian. At midnight I celebrated a solemn Mass, the Indians sang several canticles suitable to the occasion. That peace announced in the first verse of the Angelic hymn—"The *Gloria*,—Peace on earth to men of good will," was, I venture to say, literally fulfilled to the Indians of the forest. A grand banquet, according to Indian custom, followed the first Mass. Some choice pieces of the animals slain in the chase had been set apart for the occasion. I ordered half a sack of flour, and a large boiler of sweetened coffee to be added. The union, the contentment, the joy, and charity, which pervaded the whole assembly, might well be compared to the *agape* of the primitive Christians.

After the second High Mass, all the adults, with the chiefs at their head, presented themselves in the church to receive baptism, the fulfilment of their longing desires. The old man and woman whom I baptized two years before, were sponsors for all. The men were placed on the one side, according to the custom of Paraguay, and the women on the other. I was assisted during the ceremony, by Father Hoecken, their worthy and zealous missionary. Everything was done in order and with propriety. Permit me to repeat here that I should be delighted could I but communicate to the zealous and fervent, those pleasurable feelings—that overflowing of the heart, which one experiences on such occasions. Here, indeed, the Indian missionary enjoys his greatest consolations: here he obtains his strength, his courage, his zeal to labor to bring men to the knowledge of the true God, in spite of the poverty, the privations of every description, and the dangers with which he has to contend. Yes, surely, even in this life is the promise of the Saviour fulfilled with regard to him, "Ye shall receive a hundred fold." The trifling things of the world he abandons, are nothing to be compared with the blessings he finds in the wilderness. The priest does not address in vain to the Indians those beautiful words of the Roman ritual: "Receive this white garment, etc.," "Receive this burning taper, etc." He may be certain that the greater number of his catechumens will wear that spotless garment—will preserve their baptismal innocence, to the hour of their death. When I have afterwards asked them, if they have not offended God? if their conscience does not reproach them with some fault? how often have I received this touching and consoling answer: "Oh, Father! in baptism I renounced sin, I try to avoid sin, the very thought of offending God, frightens me!" The ceremonies of baptism were closed by a second instruction, and by the distribution of beads which the Indians are accustomed to say every evening in public.

About 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the solemn benediction of the blessed sacrament was given for the first time, immediately after which, upwards of fifty couples, many of whom were eighty years old, came forward to renew before the Church, their marriage promises. I could not help shedding tears of joy at witnessing this truly primitive simplicity, and the love and affection with which they pledged again their faith to each other. The last instruction was then given, and thanks were returned to God for all the blessings he had vouchsafed to shower upon them, on this ever-memor able day. The recitation of prayers and the chanting of hymns were heard in all the lodges of the camp, till the night was far advanced.

Fathers Mengarini and Serbinati, (the last-mentioned Father has since died), had the consolation to see the whole tribe of the Flat-Heads, among whom they had been laboring, approach the Holy Table on this day. Twelve young Indians, taught by Father Mengarini, performed with accuracy, several pieces of music during the midnight Mass. Fathers Point and Joset had, also, the consolation of admitting for the first time, nearly the entire tribe of the Cœur d'Alenes, on this auspicious day, to the Holy Communion. Father Point has given the particulars of this first communion in a letter, which has been published, and which you have, no doubt, read with pleasure. The Christmas of 1844 was, therefore, a great and glorious day in the Rocky Mountains.



VIEW OF THE NEW MISSION ESTABLISHMENT IN 1846, AMONG THE POINTED-HEARTS (See Letter 21.)

I will close this already lengthy letter with a few words more concerning the Pends d'Oreilles of the Bay. Early in the spring of 1845, they began to build upon the spot selected for the *Reduction* of St. Ignatius, and to open fields. On Ascension day of the same year, Father Hoecken administered baptism to upwards of a hundred adults. At my last visit, which I paid them in July last, they had already put up fourteen log houses, besides a large barn, had the timber prepared for a church, and had upwards of three hundred acres in grain, enclosed by a substantial fence. The whole village, men, women, and children, had worked most cheerfully. I counted thirty head of horned cattle—the squaws had learned to milk the cows and to churn; they had a few hogs and some domestic fowls. The number of Christians had doubled since Christmas, 1844.

A flour and saw mill, a few more ploughs, with other agricultural implements, and carpenter's tools, were much wanted in the village of St. Ignatius. All is to be commenced among these poor, good Indians, and to us they look for means and supplies, which we readily grant as far as we are able. Already was an appeal made to the generous and charitable

Christians, and it is consoling for me to say, that appeal found an echo in the hearts of the friends of the Indians, which enabled us to enlarge our missionary operations, and I may add, that the grateful prayer of the Indians is daily ascending to the throne of the Almighty, to implore the blessings of Heaven on their benefactors. In 1845 and '46, several stations were formed, and the extensive mission of New Caledonia was commenced.

I remain, with profound respect and esteem, madam, your very humble and obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXI.

A. M. D. G.

Valley of St. Mary's, Aug. [illegible]

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial, — On the 27th July, I bade farewell to Father Hoecken and his interesting little flock, consisting of about five hundred Indians. I was accompanied by two Kalispels, and some of the Cœur d'Alenes, who came to meet me. We had beautiful weather, and a path remarkably free from those obstructions so annoying to travellers in the mountains. Towards the middle of our day's journey, we reached a beautiful lake surrounded by hills, and a thick forest of larch. I have named it the Lake de Nef, as a token of gratitude towards one of the greatest benefactors of the mission. It discharges itself through a narrow passage, forming a beautiful rapid, called the Tournhout-torrent, at the termination of which it joins its limpid waters to those of the river Spokane.

Next day the sun rose majestically, and everything gave promise of an agreeable day, but these fine appearances were gradually lost behind a thick bank of ominous clouds, which, shortly after overspreading the sky, poured down such torrents of rain, that everything on us was drenched as completely as if we had waded through a river. At the foot of the great rapids, we crossed the river Spokane, and continued our route over an extensive plain, agreeably interspersed with thick groves of pine, when towards sunset we encamped close by a refreshing fountain.

A few words descriptive of our encampments during wet weather, may not be out of place. The tent erected in haste—saddles, bridles, baggage, etc., thrown into some sheltered spot—large heaps of larch branches or brushwood are cut down, and spread over the spot of ground destined for our repose—provision of as much dry wood as can be collected is now brought forth for the whole night; on this occasion we made a fire large enough to roast an ox. These preparations completed, our meal (dinner [illegible] supper the same time) consisting of flour, cam[illegible] roots, and some buffalo tallow, is thrown into a large kettle nearly filled with water. The great heat obliging the cook to stand at a respectable distance from the fire, a long pole serves as a ladle to stir about the contents until the mixture has acquired the proper density, when a vigorous attack is made upon it after a singular fashion indeed. On the present occasion we were six in number, trusting to a single spoon, but necessity soon supplied the deficiency. Two of the company used pieces of bark; two others, strips of leather; and the fifth, a small turtle-shell. Grace being said, a [illegible] formed round the kettle, and the instruments plunge and replunge into it with as much regularity and address, as a number of smiths' hammers plying at the anvils—a few moments, and the contents of the large kettle are gone, leaving not a vestige behind. We found this repast delicious, thanks to our keen appetites. Making due allowance for the tastes of others, "*de gustibus enim nil disputandum*," I confess I have never enjoyed a feast more heartily, than such as I have now described, prepared in the open air, after the Indian fashion. All the refined inventions of the art culinary, as sauces, pickles, preserves, pies, etc., designed to quicken or restore weak appetites, are here utterly useless. Loss of appetite, which among the wealthy forms the reigning complaint, furnishing abundant employment to apothecaries and doctors, is here unheard of. If these patients would have the courage to abandon for a time their high living, and traverse the wilds of this region on horseback, breakfasting at daybreak, and dining at sunset, after a ride of forty miles, I venture to predict that they will not need any refined incitements to relish as I did a simple dish prepared by the Indians. Having aired our blankets and said night prayers, our repose was not the less sound for having fared so simply, or lain upon a rough couch of brushwood. We started early the next morning, and about mid-day arrived at the mission of the Sacred Heart, where I was received with the greatest cordiality by Fathers Joset and Point, with B. B. Magri and Lyons. All the Cœur d'Alenes of the neighborhood came to welcome me. The fervor and piety of these poor Indians filled me with great joy and consolation, especially when I considered how great the change wrought in them since their conversion to Christianity. The details of this conversion have, I believe, been published by Father Point, and by the way, I may remark here, that some incidents connected with my previous mission to this country, are inserted in this letter. To these details I may add, that these Indians previous to their conversion, were shunned by the other tribes, on account, it is said, of their great power in juggling and other idolatrous practices. Indeed, they were addicted to superstitions the most absurd, blindly offering adoration to the vilest beasts, and the most common objects. Now, they are the first to scoff at these ridiculous practices, adding at the same time, with much feeling and veneration, "God has had pity on us—He has opened our eyes—He is infinitely good to us." A single instance will serve to give you some idea of the objects of their worship, and the facility with which they adopt their manitous or divinities. They related to me, that the first white man they saw in their country, wore a calico shirt spotted all over with black and white, which to them appeared like the smallpox, he also wore a white coverlet. The Cœur d'Alenes imagined that the spotted shirt was the great manitou himself—the great master of that alarming disease, the smallpox—and that the white coverlet was the great manitou of the snow; that if they could obtain possession of these, and pay them divine honors, their nation would never afterwards be visited by that dreadful scourge; and their winter hunts be rendered successful by an abundant fall of snow. They accordingly offered him in exchange for these, several of their best horses. The bargain was eagerly closed by the white man. The spotted shirt and the white coverlet became thenceforward, objects of great veneration for many years. On grand solemnities, the two manitous were carried in procession to a lofty eminence, usually consecrated to the performance of their superstitious rites. They were then respectfully spread on the grass: the great medicine-pipe offered to them, with as much veneration, as is customary with the Indians, in presenting it to the sun, the fire, the earth, and the water. The whole band of jugglers, or medicine-men, then entoned canticles of adoration to them. The service was generally terminated with a grand dance, in which the performers exhibited the most hideous contortions and extravagant gestures, accompanied with a most unearthly howling.

The term *medicine* is commonly employed by the whites, to express whatever regards the juggling, idolatrous practices of the savages; probably, because the Indian feeling his ignorance of the proper remedies in sickness, and almost wholly dependent upon chance for his subsistence, merely demands of his manitous some relief in these distressing situations. This *something* that the Indians call Power, is at times limited, say they, to the procuring of only one object, as the cure of some disease. Some other Power, again, is not so limited, it extends to many objects, as success in hunting, fishing, waging war, and avenging injuries. All this, however, varies according to the degree of confidence reposed in it by the individual, the number of his passions or the intensity of his malice. Some of the Powers are looked upon even by the savages themselves, as wicked in the extreme, the sole object of such Powers is to do evil. Moreover it is not at all times granted, even when those professing to be most powerful medicine-men, earnestly desire it. It comes only during sleep, in a fainting fit, during a loud clap of thunder, or in the delirious excitement of some passion; but never without some definite purpose, as to foment dissensions, or exasperate to deeds of violence, or to obtain some corporal advantage; favors which are always purchased at the expense of the soul. Much exaggeration is, of course, clearly characteristic of those misnamed effects of preternatural power. Most of those that came under my notice, and which the Indians attributed to preternatural agency, were the effects of causes purely natural. Notwithstanding these deplorable disorders of the soul, it is my greatest consolation to reflect, that these superstitious practices, in consequence of the many palpable contradictions they admit, become a spiritual malady, the least difficult to cure.

On the 5th of August, I left the Mission of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus," accompanied by the Rev. Father Point. Three Indian families, desirous of visiting St. Mary's, served us for guides. Our journey for some days, lay along the serpentine course of the river St. Ignatius, in the valley of the North. The soil of this valley is for the most part rich, and well adapted to cultivation, but subject to frequent inundations. Grain and potatos are here cultivated, by the Indians with great success. Father Joset, assisted by the savages, has already enclosed and prepared for cultivation, a large field, capable of affording sustenance to several Indian families. Our hopes, then, of seeing these poor Indians furnished with a plentiful supply of provisions, and their wandering habits thereby checked, will with the blessing of God, be realized at no very distant day. To attain the desirable object of uniting them in villages, and thus forming them to habits of industry, we need, however, more means than we possess at present—we are very much in want of seeds of various kinds, and of agricultural implements.

Before arriving at the snow-capped chain of mountains, which separates the Cœur d'Alenes from the Flat-Heads, we wound our way for two days, through forests almost impenetrable, and over immense beds of rock, always following the course of the river, except where its tortuous windings would lead us too circuitous a route. So tortuous indeed is its course here, that in less than eight hours, we crossed it no less than forty-four times. The majestic cedars that shade the gorge at this point are truly prodigious, most of them measure from twenty to thirty feet in circumference, with a proportionate height, and so numerous, that as the rays of the sun cannot penetrate the dense mass, perpetual night may be said, without exaggeration, to reign here. I doubt whether the owl could have selected a more fitting abode, certainly none so majestic or mysterious. The death-like silence of this glen, broken only by the passing breeze, the occasional visit of some wild animal, or the constant murmuring of the rills from the rocky banks, impress the beholder with feelings of a most unearthly yet pleasing nature.

With much difficulty and fatigue we forced a passage through this dense mass of forest, stooping half the time upon the neck of the horse, to avoid the low thorny branches, so thickly crossed together, that one is inclined at first sight, to abandon all hope of wedging his way through them. Its termination brought us to the foot of the great chain of mountains. It occupied us nearly another day to ascend this by a narrow winding path, which is shaded by one of finest forests in Oregon. Towards sunset we reached the top, where we pitched our camp, within a few paces of one of those immense snow masses, that perpetually shroud this lofty chain. Here we enjoyed a most magnificent view—the horizon for some hundred miles around presented a spectacle of surpassing grandeur: as far as the eye could reach, a long succession of mountains, towering cliffs, and lofty pinnacles, exhibited their dazzling snow-capped summits to our astonished vision. The very silence of this vast wilderness strikes the beholder with feelings of deep sublimity; not even a breeze stirred to break the charm of this enchanting view. I shall never forget the splendor of the scene we witnessed, as the last rays of the setting sun were throwing their full lustre upon the myriads of pinnacles that ranged far away towards the distant horizon.

The descent on the eastern side of this mountain is less abrupt, presenting slopes of rich verdure, adorned with a great variety of plants and flowers. This descent also occupied us an entire day. We next arrived at a forest, a twin-sister, if I may be allowed the expression, of the one I have just described. Here the river St. Francis Regis meanders through innumerable hoary cedars, pine trees, and an impenetrable thicket of bushes of every species. With the happiest recollections, we finally encamped on the banks of the St. Mary's river, in the Flat-Head valley—the nursery of our first missionary operations in the Far West.

In my next, I propose giving you some details of the present condition of our first children in God, the good and deserving Flat-

Heads. I recommend myself to God in your prayers.

I remain, with profound respect and esteem, reverend and dear Father, your very humble servant, and brother in Christ,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXII.

LETTER OF THE REV. FATHER POINT, S. J.

MISSIONARY IN OREGON.

Village of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
————, 1845.

I LEARN by letters from Europe, that you take a lively interest in our dear missions. From this, I conclude that you will be very glad to learn some of those things which are passing amongst us. I take the more pleasure, because I can detail what my own eyes have witnessed, and because I can give a new proof of a truth, which you love to extend, viz., that it is to their devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that the pastors of souls are indebted for the consolations they enjoy: this will explain the wonders of mercy of which they are witnesses.

You know already the history of the *Flat-Heads;* truly their conversion is the result of a wonderful outflowing of the riches of grace; but I do not hesitate to say, that the conversion of the *Pointed-Hearts* is a still more striking indication of God's love to man. What were these savages less than a quarter of a century ago? They had hearts so hard, that if their first visiters have undertaken to give a true description of them, they could not find an expression more just, than is the singular name which they bear to this day. Their knowledge was so limited, that, giving themselves up to the worship of animals they had no idea of the true God nor of their soul, much less of a future life; finally they were a race of men, so degenerate that they had barely two or three notions of the whole natural law, and almost all were strangers to it in practice.

What a different aspect they now present! I will not say that they are perfect: that would be an exaggeration even in the eyes of persons little versed in the knowledge of the human heart. Everybody knows, that people who are converted, always retain something of their primitive character, and that the defects of education are not corrected except by a long course of years; but I say to the glory of Him, who can change the hardest rocks into children of Abraham, that, at this day, our *Pointed-Hearts* are true believers.

It is only two years since the cross was planted on their soil, and all, with a very few exceptions have made their first communion.

About fifteen years ago, several missionaries begged to be employed among the savages. A new doctrine was soon spread among the Pointed-Hearts, telling them that there is but one God, who has, beyond the earth we see, two things which we do not see:—a place for the good, and a place for the bad; that the Son of God, in all respects like his Father, seeing all men running in the bad road, came down from Heaven to put them in the right way; but that in order to effect this, it was necessary for him to die upon a cross. One evening, all the families, who were dispersed in different directions, for fishing, for hunting, and gathering roots, assembled upon the ground of an old chief called Ignatius, to see the auther of this news. Regardless of fatigue, they prolonged their sitting to the silence of the night, and listened to all the details of the glorious message.

God is great—Jesus Christ is good:—two truths the admission of which seemed to be the result of the first sitting: was this, indeed, the case? Not so much, perhaps, as would have been desirable: for before the families separated, Heaven sent a scourge, which struck with death a great number of them. At the moment it raged with the greatest violence, one of the dying—since named Stephen—heard a voice from above, which said: "Cast down thy idols; adore Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be cured." The dying man believed the word, and was cured. He went about the camp and related what had taken place: all the sick who heard him imitated his example, and recovered their health. I have this fact from the mouth of the savage who heard the voice from heaven, and the same has been confirmed by eye-witnesses, who could say, "I, myself, have been the object of that wonder, and my eyes have seen the mountain at the foot of which the idols were cast down."

The savage takes little notice of an event which does not strike him in a sensible manner; but what I have related was marked by two such peculiar characters, that it left traces in the memory of all. However, neither constancy nor reflection is to be found in the savage. After some years of fidelity to the impressions received, the greater part returned to their former idolatry. This retrograde movement was accelerated by the medicine-men—a kind of charlatans, who set themselves up for physicians and prophets, and pretend to perform wonderful things, especially, to cure the sick by their skill and supernatural power. At the word of one of the chiefs, who, probably, had not ceased to be an idolater, the men convoked an assembly of those who were called believers, in which it was resolved to return to their ancient practices; and, from that moment, the animals of the country, now become again divine, re-entered into possession of their ancient honors. The mass of the tribe, had, indeed, no confidence in them; but, either through fear of the medicine-men, or by natural curiosity, they took part, at least by their presence, in the sacrilegious worship paid to them. Happily, choice souls were always among them to intercede with Heaven for their deluded brethren; I know many, who, from the time in which God was pleased to manifest himself among them, have not the least faults upon their consciences, with which to reproach themselves.

Such was pretty nearly the condition of the people when Providence sent among them the Rev. Father De Smet. His visit, the circumstances of which have been related elsewhere, disposed them so much in favor of the *Black-gowns*, that it was determined I should be sent to their aid. Three months after, that is, at the close of the hunting expeditions of the autumn of 1842, I left St. Mary's to place the new converts under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The same day I entered their territory, the first Friday of November, I made with three chiefs who came to seek me, the promised consecration, and on the first Friday of December, in the midst of chants and prayers, the cross was raised on the borders of a lake, where the poor savages had united for fishing. Thanks be to God, we can say, that the miraculous draught of St. Peter was spiritually renewed. For they spoke no more of their assemblies of impostors, their diabolical visions, nor superstitious ceremonies, which had before been so common; and most important of all, gambling, which had always occupied a great portion of their time, was two weeks afterwards, abandoned; the conjugal bond, which for centuries, perhaps, had known among them neither unity nor indissolubility, was brought back to its primitive character. A beautiful sight was presented by the *medicine-men* themselves; who with their own hands, did justice to the wretched instruments hell had used to deceive them. During the long nights of that period, it will not be necessary to tell how many sacrifices were made of feathers, wolves' tails, stags' feet, deer's hoofs, wooden images, &c.

Scarcely was the bad tree cut down and thrown into the fire, than a blessing on their temporal affairs was united to that of their spiritual. In one day three hundred deer became the prey of the hunters.

The first days of spring, the reunion of the people at the place agreed on for the construction of a village was more numerous than the first. It was formed upon the ancient plans in Paraguay, and each one, according to his strength and industry, contributed towards its construction. Trees were felled, roads opened, a church erected, and the public fields were sown; and, thanks to the piety of our savages, Holy Week, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost were celebrated with becoming solemnity. In truth, things went so well, that the enemy of men, perceiving his prey escape him, redoubled his efforts. We experienced some loss in consequence of a storm; but after a partial destruction, the storm only resulted in purifying the atmosphere.

Towards the end of October, 1844, one hundred families of the Pointed-Hearts reunited in one village. The sight of their little lodges around the house of God, brought to mind the touching idea of the pelican in the desert. Young and old united to make their first communion, or renew it. Many had already acquired a certain degree of instruction, but the greater portion, especially of the old, were far from being sufficiently instructed; and the time the Black-gown had to prepare them before the great winter chase, was November and December, for the chase could not be put off, it is essential to the life of a savage. It was necessary, then, to hasten, and choose the shortest method of instructing them.

Everybody knows the savage has the eye of a lynx, and never forgets what he has once seen; therefore when he attaches any idea to a sensible sign, he can always recall it as soon as he sees the sign under his eyes; thus they have a wonderful facility in speaking by signs, and a great inclination to render their thoughts by images: upon this faculty I based my system of instruction. I made images, representing what they ought to believe. Some of these represented the faults and vices they ought to shun, others the virtues they should practise. After this, with a little stick in my hand, I explained my representations, and tried to adapt myself to the understanding of all.

The success of this method surpassed my expectation: for, having made the most intelligent repeat what I had said, I had the pleasure to see that they lost nothing of what was essential, and immediately I formed classes for repetition. The first repetition was made immediately after the instruction; the second in their lodges, the third by the chiefs in their harangues, and the fourth at the beginning of the next instruction.

The plan was insisted upon, and rapid progress made, not only in their instruction, but also in their morals. Those who exhorted joined to their exhortations the force of private example, so that the mass of the people seemed to be led on, by attraction.

From the 9th of September to the time in which I write—a period of six months not one single fault, which can be called serious, so far as my knowledge extends, has been committed in the village of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and a great many, who reproached themselves with light failings, cease not to make public confession in terms of grief, which it would be desirable to see the greater culprits exhibit at the tribunal of penance. I have seen husbands come after their wives, and mothers after their daughters, not to excuse the accusations which they had made, but to acknowledge that their want of patience and humility were the cause of the failings of the others.

It is worthy of remark that all the adults, who had not yet received baptism, and all who united to prepare for their first communion, not one was judged unworthy to receive the sacraments. Their simplicity, piety, charity, and especially their faith, were admirable. And truly all these virtues were necessary for these good old men, who, for the sake of learning their prayers, had to become the scholars of their children, and for the children to enable them to do violence to their natural vivacity, while they slowly communicated to their old parents and grand-parents, a part of what they had learned; and the chiefs would rise at the dawn of the day, and sometimes in the middle of the night, to exhort their *people to weep over their sins.*

I have spoken of their faith. How pure and above all, how confiding it was! The first idea, neccessary to impress on their minds was, that the goodness of God is not less great than his power, and they were so convinced of it, that they begged God to perform miracles, as they would beg their daily bread. They were told, that the sacrament of extreme unction had the power not only to purify the soul, but to restore health to the body; it did not occur to them to doubt of the one more than of the other.

They have great faith in the sign of the cross. They are accustomed to make it at the beginning of their prayers, and of all their principal actions. Not satisfied with making it themselves, their children can scarcely pronounce a word, before they teach them to articulate the words of the sign of the cross. I saw a father and mother bending over the cradle of an only son, who was about to die. They made their best efforts to suggest to him to make the sign of the cross, and the child having raised his little hand to his forehead, made the consoling sign and immediately expired.

A woman, sitting near the grave of her only daughter, was conversing with her little boy, whom she had that day presented at the baptismal font. "See," said she, "my child, how happy it is to die after being baptized! If you should die to-day, you would see again our little Clementia." And the pious mother exhibited such a calmness in her tone of voice and countenance, that she seemed to have a foretaste of the happy abode of which she spoke.

Our infant church presented the picture of the purest virtues, when the happy period for which she sighed was approaching. The week preceding the celebration of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary, was devoted to prepare the people for the reception of holy communion. The time, of course, did not admit of frequent instructions, long prayers and general confessions. The good Father Joset gave instructions. Their prayers were fervent, and experience had already taught them the necessity of true sorrow for past sins, which they exhibited in a lively manner at the confessional. I used all the exertions I could to prepare those whose understandings appeared more limited than the others; and their piety, calmness and perseverance, have put to flight all the fears which rested on my mind. The church was small; it measured in length fifty feet, and in breadth twenty-four. It was indeed, poor, but from every part of the wall and ceiling, were suspended rich festoons of leaves. While the stars were still shining in the firmament, the chant, *Lauda Sion*, was heard. But who sung that divine canticle? The savages, who lately addressed their prayers only to the animals of their mountains. Go to the foot of the altar and see the new adorers, bowing their heads before the Eternal One. The representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Cross on which he expired, raised their thoughts to the abode of glory, and caused them to centre there all their affections. They approached the altar to receive holy communion with the greatest order and devotion. It was Father Joset who had happiness to distribute to them the bread of life,—a happiness, so much the more felt, as he had just arrived among them. Before they approached the holy table, he addressed them a few words; but the tender piety apparent in all at the moment of communicating, made him fear to spoil the work of God by adding more words of his own, and he left them to their own devotion.

We recited the usual prayers for the intentions of the Church, and closed the morning services by chanting again the *Lauda Sion*. The high mass was celebrated at ten o'clock.

In the evening took place the renovation of the promises of baptism. The church was illuminated, at least as well as our poverty would permit. The sacrament of baptism was conferred on twelve adults. After a preparatory instruction, instead of the ordinary formulas, which were a little difficult to be translated into the Indian language, all of them, to show their constant fidelity, recited three acts of love to God. In hearing them, we remarked, that like the prince of the Apostles, they replied to the threefold enquiry of their Saviour. The holy sacrament was exposed. To the expression of unanimous and forcible love, their looks of piety directed towards the altar, seemed to add: O beauty! always ancient, always new! too late have we loved thee; but we will love thee forever! The benediction of the blessed sacrament followed, and closed that great and beautiful day, which had been so rich in every kind of spiritual gifts. It was with difficulty that these good souls left the place, which had, that day, been the witness of their prayers and promises. The Pointed-Hearts exhibited by their prayers, their canticles, and their holy conversations, a foretaste of heavenly joys. They often came to visit the Black-gowns. Some days, I was surrounded by these visitors. They all waited in profound silence, till I had finished my office. One of them then chanted the first verse of *Lauda Sion*, in which all the voices joined. Thus, it is a consoling truth, that, at the extremities of the heathen world, as well as in the centre of civilization, the church puts forth a united effort for the conversion and salvation of mankind.

I am, devotedly yours, in Christ,

N. POINT.

No. XXIII.

A. M. D. G.

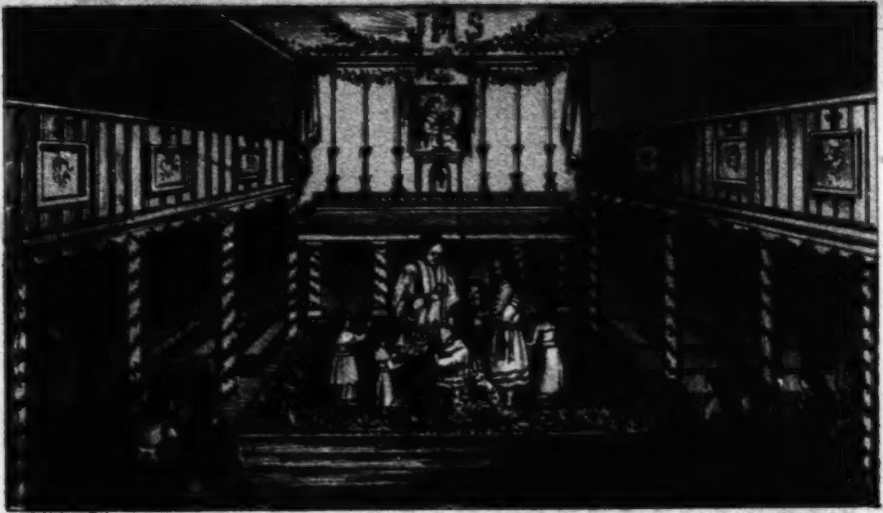
Flat-Head Camp, Yellowstone River,
September 6th, 1846.

Rev. and Dear Father Provincial,—After an absence of about eighteen months, employed in visiting the various distant tribes, and extending among them the kingdom of Christ, I returned to the nursery, so to speak, of our Apostolic labors in the Rocky Mountains. Judge of the delight I experienced, when I found the little log church, we built five years ago, about to be replaced by another which will bear comparison with those in civilized countries, materials, everything ready to commence erecting it, the moment they can procure some ropes to place the heavy timbers on the foundation. Another agreeable surprise, however, yet awaited me; a mill had been constructed, destined to contribute largely to the increasing wants of the surrounding country. It is contrived to discharge the two-fold charitable object of feeding the hungry and sheltering the houseless. The flour mill grinds ten or twelve bushels in a day; and the saw mill furnishes an abundant supply of plank, posts, etc., for the public and private building of the nation settled here. Indeed, the location stood much in need of so useful a concern. The soil yields abundant crops of wheat, oats and potatoes—the rich prairie here is capable of supporting thousands of cattle. Two large rivulets, now almost useless, can, with a little labor, be made to irrigate the fields, gardens, and orchards of the village. The stock at present on this farm, consists of about forty head of cattle, a fast-increasing herd of hogs and a prolific progeny of domestic fowl. In addition to the mill, twelve log houses, of regular construction, have been put up. Hence, you can form some idea of the temporal advantages enjoyed by the Flat-heads of St. Mary's village.

St. Mary's, or Bitter-Root valley, is one of the finest in the mountains, presenting, throughout its whole extent of about two hundred miles, numerous grazing, but few arable tracts of land. Irrigation, either by natural or artificial means, is absolutely necessary to the cultivation of the soil, in consequence of the long summer drought that prevails in this region, commencing in April and ending only in October. This difficulty, however, if the country should be ever thickly settled, can be easily obviated, as the whole region is well supplied with numerous streams and rivulets. These remarks apply to the valleys contiguous to St. Mary's, the general aspect of them differing perhaps but slightly in regard to the heights of the mountains, the colossal dimensions of the rocks, or the vast extent of the plains.

After what has been said in my former letters in relation to religion, little now remains that has a direct reference to it; but you will learn with much pleasure, that the improvements made in the Flat-head village, afford the missionary stationed there great facilities for prosecuting successfully the grand object of his desires, viz., the eternal happiness of the poor benighted Indian tribes, placed beyond the reach of his immediate influence. The village is now the centre of attraction to all the neighboring, and many of the distant tribes. The missionary always avails himself of these occasional visits, to convey to them the glad tidings of salvation. Among the recent visitors were,

THE LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS



INTERIOR OF S^{t}. MARY'S CHURCH, FLAT-HEAD MISSION, *COMMUNION AT EASTER.* (See Letter 4th) the great chief of the Snake Indians with his band of warriors; the Banax and Nez-Percés, conducted by several of their chiefs,—even several bands of Black-Feet; besides these, there were also, on their return from the great hunt, almost the whole tribe of the Pends-d'Oreilles, belonging to the station of St. Francis Borgia. These last in particular, the greater part of whom I baptized last year, may be said to rival the zeal of the Flat-Heads in the practice of their religious duties.

After the festival of Easter, the abundant supply of provisions, in the granaries and cellars of the village, enabled the minister to invite all the visitors present to a feast, consisting of potatos, parsnips, turnips, beets, beans, peas, and a great variety of meats, of which the greater portion of the guests had never before tasted. Among the industrial products which are mainly owing to the skill and activity of their present pastor, Father Mengarini, I must not forget to mention a kind of sugar, extracted from the potato.

Let us next turn to the improved condition of the people themselves. Polygamy—or rather a connection, if possible, still more loose—is now, thank God, entirely abolished among our newly-converted Indians; there is, consequently, an evident increase of population. The reckless abandonment of the helpless infant—the capricious discarding of wife and children—the wanton effusion of human blood—are no longer known amongst them. Our feelings are not outraged by the brutal practice, heretofore so commonly witnessed, of a father considering a horse a fair exchange for his daughter; the justice of allowing the young Indian maiden to choose her future partner for life is now universally allowed;—the requisite care of their offspring is regarded in its proper light, as a Christian duty;—attention is paid to the wants of the sick;—changes of treatment, with the remedies administered according to our advice, have probably been the means, under Providence, of rescuing many from premature death. The long-cherished vindictive feelings which so frequently led to depopulating wars, are now supplanted by a Christian sense of justice, which, if unfortunately compelled to take up arms, does so only to repel unjust aggression or defend their inherent rights, but always with the fullest confidence in the protecting arm of Heaven.

Indeed their unbounded confidence in the God of battle, is well rewarded; a truth which the enemies of the Flat-Heads invariably acknowledge. "The medicine of the Black-gowns," (an expression synonymous with the true religion,) "is," say they, "the strongest of all." Did time permit, I could adduce almost innumerable instances to confirm the belief universally entertained here, that Almighty God visibly protects them in the wars they are compelled to wage with the hostile tribes. A few of these, for the authenticity of which I can vouch, may suffice for the present.

In 1840, when threatened by a formidable band of Black-Feet, amounting to nearly eight hundred warriors, the Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles, scarcely numbering sixty, betook themselves to prayer, imploring the aid of Heaven, which alone could save them in the unequal contest. Confident of success, they rose from their knees in the presence of their enemies, and engaged the overwhelming odds against them. The battle lasted five days. The Black-Feet were defeated, leaving eighty warriors dead upon the field; while the Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles sustained a loss of only one man; who, however, survived the battle four months, and had the happiness of receiving baptism the day before his death.

In 1842, four Pends-d'Oreilles and a Pointed Heart were met and immediately attacked by a party of Black-Feet. At the first onset, the Black-Feet had to deplore the loss of their chief. Aroused by the noise of the musketry, the camp of the Pends-d'Oreilles rushed to the assistance of their companions, and without losing a single man, completely routed the enemy. Their escape is the more remarkable, as rushing into the entrenchments of the Black-Feet, they received a volley of shot poured in upon them by the enemy.

The Flat-Heads were again attacked, during the winter hunt of 1845, by a party of the Banax, which, though outnumbering them nearly three times, they soon put to flight, with the loss of three of the Banax party. The Flat-Heads acknowledge that the Banax are the bravest of their enemies; yet this did not deter them, though but seven in number, from fighting a whole village of the latter, that had rashly violated the rights of hospitality.

During the summer hunt of the same year, the united camp of Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles, when theatened, hesitated not a moment to engage with a band of Black-Feet four times their number. The latter, fearing the "medicine of the Black-gowns," skulked around their enemies, avoiding an open fight. The former perceiving this, pretended flight, in order to draw the Black-Feet into the open plain: the snare succeeded; and the Flat-Heads and Pends-d'Oreilles suddenly wheeling, attacked and repulsed them with considerable loss, driving the enemy before them in hot pursuit, as they would a herd of buffaloes. Twenty-three Black-Feet warriors lay dead on the field, after the engagement, while the Pends-d'Oreilles lost but three, and the Flat-Heads only one.

I shall close these sketches of Indian warfare, so remarkably evincing, as they do, the special protection of Heaven, with an account of an engagement which, as it was the occasion of my first interview with the Black-Feet, and by its consequences contributed much towards my favourable reception among them, will not I trust, prove entirely devoid of interest, if given a little more in detail.

In 1846, while engaged in one of these hunting excursions, the camp of the Flat-Heads was reinforced by thirty lodges of the Nez-percés, and a dozen lodges of the Black-Feet at their own solicitation. The Flat-Heads encamped in the neighbourhood of the Crows, purposely to renew the terms of peace, if the latter felt so disposed. The Crows, perceiving in the united camp, the Nez-Percés and Black-Feet, with whom they were at war, and knowing their own superiority both in numbers and bodily strength, (they are the most robust of the Indian tribes) rushed into it like a torrent, evidently more anxious to provoke a contest than to make overtures of peace. The calm remonstrances of the Flat-Heads, and the wise admonitions of their own chief, were lost upon the now almost infuriated mutinous band of the Crows.

If the threatened outbreak had occurred at that moment, it is probable that the whole united camp would have been massacred in the hand-fight, for which evidently the Crows came prepared, with loaded guns and other destructive weapons, while the Flat-Heads and the others were totally unprovided. At this critical juncture, fortunately, indeed I may say providentially, my interpreter Gabriel, and a Pend-d'Oreille named Charles, forced their way breathless into the disordered camp, and announced the arrival of the *Black-gown* who had visited them four years ago. The alarming scene they witnessed was indeed what they had expected for as we travelled to overtake the Flat-Head camp at the place designed for their interview with the Crows, we perceived from the marks of their daily encampments, that some Black Feet and Pends-d'Oreilles were with the Flat-Heads; we accordingly feared a collision would result from the interview. I therefore despatched with all possible speed, Gabriel and Charles, to announce my arrival. Well did they execute the commission—they rode almost at full gallop during a whole day and night, performing in this short period a journey which occupied the camp fourteen days. This intelligence roused the Crow chiefs to an energetic exercise of their authority. They now seized the first missiles at hand, and enforced the weight of their arguments upon their mutinous subjects, as long as there was left in the united camp the back of a Crow on which to inflict punishment. This forced separation, though it may have checked the present ebullition, could not be of long duration. It needed but a spark to rekindle their hostile dispositions into open war. The next day, as if to provoke a rupture, the disaffected Crows stole thirty horses from the Flat-Heads. Two innocent persons were unfortunately charged with the crime, and punished. The mistake being discovered, the *amende honorable* was made, but to no purpose. The Flat-Heads, aware of their dangerous position, employed the interval in fortifying their camp, stationing their women and children in a place of safety, and arming themselves for the contest. An immense cloud of dust in the neighborhood of the Crow camp at ten o'clock, announced the expected attack. On they came, with the impetuosity of an avalanche, until within musket shot of the advanced guard of the allied camp, who had just risen to their feet to listen to a few words addressed them by their chief, Stiettietlotso, and to meet the foe. "My friends," said Moses, (the name I gave him in baptism) "if it be the will of God, we shall conquer—if it be not his will, let us humbly submit to whatever it shall please his goodness to send us. Some of us must expect to fall in this contest: if there be any one here unprepared to die, let him retire; in the meanwhile let us constantly keep Him in mind." He had scarcely finished speaking, when the fire of the enemy was returned by his band, with such terrible effect as to make them shift their mode of attack into another, extremely fatiguing to their horses. After the battle had raged for some time in this way, Victor, the grand chief of the Flat-Heads, perceiving the embarrassed position of the enemy, cried out: "Now, my men, mount your best horses, and charge them." The manœuvre was successful. The Crows fled in great disorder, the Flat-Heads abandoning the pursuit only at sun-down, when they had driven the enemy two miles from their camp.

Fourteen warriors of the Crows fell in the engagement, and nine were severely wounded, as we subsequently learned from three Black-Feet prisoners, who availed themselves of their capturers' defeat to recover their liberty. On the part of the allied camp, only one was killed, the son of a Nez-Percé chief, who fell by the hand of a Crow chief, in so cowardly a manner, that the indignation of the allied camp was at once raised into immediate action—it was in fact, the first shot fired and the first blood drawn on either side; the boy was yet quite a child. Besides this loss, though the engagement lasted for several hours, only three were wounded, two of them so slightly that by application of the remedies I brought with me, they recovered in a short time; the third died a few days after my arrival in the camp.

This defeat was the more mortifying to the Crows, as they had been continually boasting of their superior prowess in war, and taunting their enemies with the most insulting, opprobrious epithets. They had besides, forcibly and most unjustly drawn on the engagement.

Indeed, I look upon the miraculous escape of our Christian warriors, in this fierce contest, as further evidence of the peculiar protection of Heaven; especially when I consider the numerous instances of individual bravery, perhaps I should say reckless daring, displayed on the part of the allied camp. The son of a Flat-Head chief named Raphael, quite a youth, burning to engage in the contest, requested his father to let him have his best horse. To this the father reluctantly consented, as the boy had been rather weak from sickness. When mounted, off he bounded like an arrow from the bow, and the superior mettle of his steed soon brought him close upon the heels of a large Crow chief, who, turning his head round to notice his pursuer, pulled up his horse to punish the temerity of the boy, at the same time bending to escape the arrow then levelled at him. The boy must have shot the arrow with enormous force, for it entered under the lower left rib, the barb passing out under the right shoulder, leaving nothing but the feathers to be seen where it entered.

The chief fell dead. In an instant a volley was poured in upon the boy—his horse fell perfectly riddled, with the rider under him.—He was stunned by the fall, and lay to all appearance dead. According to the custom of the Indians, of inflicting a heavy blow upon the dead body of their enemy, he received while in this position, a severe stroke from each individual of the several bands of Crows that passed him.—He was taken up half dead, by his own tribe, when they passed in pursuit of the enemy. The ardour and impetuosity of the young men belonging to the Flat-Head camp amazed the oldest warriors present, and formed the theme of universal admiration, as well as the dread of their enemies. Even the women of the Flat-Heads mingled in the fray. One, the mother of seven children, conducted her own sons into the battle-field. Having perceived that the horse of her eldest son was breaking down in a single combat with a Crow, she threw herself between the combatants, and with a knife put the Crow to flight. Another, a young woman perceiving that the quivers of her party were nearly exhausted, coolly collected, amidst a shower of arrows, those that lay scattered around her, and brought them to replenish the [illegible] exhausted store. The celebrated Mary Quille, already distinguished in numerous battles, pursued, with axe in hand, a Crow, and having failed to come up with him, returned, saying: "I thought that these great talkers were men. I was mistaken: it is not worth while even for women to attempt to chase them."

The little party of Black-Feet, animated by a spirit of revenge, for the loss of half their tribe, massacred the preceding year by the Crows, and probably influenced by a feeling of their safety while they fought in company with the Flat-Head Christians, did signal service in the combat.

In the meantime, Gabriel and Charles, fearing the threatened outbreak, immediately started back to meet me and hasten my arrival, my presence being considered necessary to prevent the effusion of blood. I arrived at the Flat-Head camp the day after the battle. I found everything ready to repel a second attack, should that be attempted. I immediately sent an express to the Crows, to announce my arrival, and at the same time, to convey to them the great desire I had to see them, especially for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between the contending parties. But it appeared that after having buried their dead, they retreated precipitately; so that no account of their destination could be had. My express told me that there must have been excessive grief in the camp of the Crows, as the usual marks of it could be traced in every direction, such as the dissevered joints of fingers, and the numerous stains of blood, caused by the wounds which the parents of the deceased inflict upon themselves on such occasions.

Shortly after my arrival, the Black-Feet came in a body to my lodge, to express in a manner truly eloquent, their admiration of the Flat-Heads, with whom in future they desired to live on terms of the closest friendship. "To their prayers," said they, "must this extraordinary victory be attributed. While the battle lasted, we saw their old men, their women, and children, on their knees, imploring the aid of Heaven; the Flat-Heads did not lose a single man—one only fell, a young Nez-Percé, and another mortally wounded. But the Nez-Percés did not pray. We prayed morning and evening with the Flat-Heads, and heard the instructions of the chiefs." They then begged of [illegible] their own affecting way to take pity on them [illegible] be charitable to them: they now determined to hear the words of the Great Manitou of the whites, and to follow the course which the Redeemer had marked out on earth. Having addressed them on the nature of the life they had proposed to adopt, they all without exception presented their children for baptism, to the number of eighty.

The day after this sacred ceremony, they called on me, requesting to be allowed to express in their own way, the excess of joy which they felt on account of this two-fold victory. On returning from the late field of battle, the warriors, at the head of whom was a young chief, chanted songs of triumph, accompanied with the beating of drums; at each beat, they sent forth a wild and piercing shout; then followed the song, and so on alternately;—wild as the music was, it was not without harmony. It continued thus, during almost the whole of our route. We marched along the right bank of the Yellow-stone River, having on our left a chain of mountains resembling those old portals to which history has given the name of "ancient chivalry." We had scarcely arrived at the encampment, when the Black-Feet commenced, under the shade of a beautiful cluster of pines, their arrangements for a dance, insisting, at the same time, upon showing the Black-gowns how highly they valued their presence among them, and how gratified they would be to have them witness this display. There was, indeed, nothing in it that could give occasion to offended modesty to turn aside and blush. I need not tell you it was not the polka, the waltz, or any thing resembling the dances of modern civilized life. The women alone figure in it, old and young; from the youngest child capable of walking, to the oldest matron present. Among them I have seen several old women upwards of eighty years, whose feeble limbs required the aid of a staff in their movements through the dance. Almost all appeared in the best costume of the warriors, which, however, was worn over their own dress, a sort of tunic they always wear, and which contributed also not a little to the modesty of their appearance. Some carried the arms that had done most execution in battle, but the greater part held a green bough in the hand. In proportion as the dresses increase in singularity, the colors in variety, and the jingling of the bells in sound, in the same degree is the effect upon the rude spectator heightened. The whole figure is surmounted by a [illegible] of plumes, which by the regular movements of the individual is made to harmonise with the song, and seems to add much gracefulness to the whole scene. To lose nothing of so grand a spectacle, the Indians mount their horses, or climb the neighboring trees. The dance itself consists of a little jump, more or less lively, according to the beat of the drum. This is beaten only by the men, and all unite in the song. To break the monotony, or lend some new interest to the scene, occasionally a sudden, piercing scream is added. If the dance languishes, haranguers and those most skilful in grimaces, come to its aid. As in jumping the dancers tend towards a common centre, it often happens that the ranks become too close, then they fall back in good order to form a large circle, and commence anew in better style.

After the dance, followed the presentation of the calumet. It is borne by the wife of the chief, accompanied by two other women, on the breast of one of whom rests the head of the pipe, and upon that of the other, the stem handsomely adorned with feathers. The most distinguished personage of the nation precedes the calumet bearers, and conducts them around the circle of dancers. The object, probably of the last part of the ceremony, the termination of the rejoicings, is to indicate, that the best fruit of the victory they celebrate is the peace which follows. To establish this peace upon a better foundation, is a thought constantly uppermost in my mind. May God grant that our efforts to plant the crop of peace among these wild children of the forest, be not unavailing; I earnestly recommend these poor souls to the prayers of the faithful.

Having thus, more fully perhaps than the limits of a single letter would seem to justify, redeemed the promise given in my last, of recounting some of the advantages, spiritual and temporal, which the Flat-Heads enjoy, it may now be proper to resume the course of events up to the present date. On the 16th of August, we left St. Mary's by a mountain gap, called the "Devil's gate," a name which it has probably received from the fact of its forming the principal entrance of the marauding parties of the Black-Feet. We encamped the first night, at the foot of the Black-Foot forks. Innumerable rivulets, and several beautiful lakes contribute largely to this river. Towards its head, to the north-east, there is an easy pass for cars and wagons. The valley we ascended, is watered by a beautiful stream called the Cart River. It was through this valley we wound our way in former days, with all our baggage, to the spot where St. Mary's now stands. We crossed the mountains in the vicinity of the Arrowstone fork, another easy pass, and descended a tributary of the Jefferson as far as its outlet, through rather a wild, broken, and mountainous country, with here and there an extensive, open plain, the ordinary resort of innumerable herds of buffalo. The seventh day found us encamped in the immense plain through which the forks of the Missouri diverge, ascending to the source at the very top of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains. In travelling through these wilds, great care is to be had in order to avoid the sudden attack of some of those straggling war-parties that infest this neighborhood purposely to search for scalps, plunder, and the fame of some daring exploit. We halted every evening for a few hours, to take a bite, as the trapper would say, and to give some food and rest to our animals. When it was quite dark, we would kindle a brisk fire as if to last until morning; then under cover of the night, proceed on our journey for about ten miles, to some unsuspected place, thus eluding our enemies, should any have followed in our track, or be lurking in the neighborhood, awaiting the midnight hour to execute their murderous designs. From the three forks we went easterly, crossing by an easy pass the mountain chain which separates the head waters of the Missouri from the Yellow-Stone River, a distance of about forty miles. We followed in the track of the Flat-Head camp for several days, when I sent Gabriel, my interpreter, with a Pend-d'Oreille Indian in advance to discover what direction the camp had taken, and to bring back speedy news regarding their movements, and also to learn the dispositions of the Crows whom I designed to visit. Four days later I was met by a few Flat-Heads on their way to find me, when I was apprised of the treachery of the Crows, and the severe chastisement they had so deservedly received. I travelled the whole of that night, and arrived next day in the allied camp, as I have already informed you. Having failed to obtain the desired interview with the Crows, our attention will be now turned towards the Black-Feet, with whose favorable disposition to receive the gospel you are already acquainted. The result of this determination will form the subject of my next [illegible]. I recommend myself to God in your prayers.

I remain, with sentiments of profound respect and esteem, reverend, dear father, your very humble servant and brother in Christ.

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXIV.

A. M. D. G.

St. Louis University,
January 1st, 1847.

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial,—You are already acquainted with our determination to accompany the Black-Feet in returning to their country. In the sequel of this letter you will learn, with pleasure, how far Almighty God has blessed our humble efforts in carrying this resolution into effect. After the battle, described in my letter from the Yellow-Stone camp, the Crows, it appears, fled to the Wind River Mountains, determined, however, to avenge themselves on the Black-Feet, whom they now designed to follow into their own country. The latter, probably through fear of this assault, resolved to remain with the Flat-Head camp, until it reached the head waters of the Muscle-shell River. In leaving the Yellow-Stone our direction lay towards the north.

through a broken and undulating, dry and woodless country, destitute of any water fit to drink—stagnant pools of brackish water being the only kind found here to satiate the thirst. Only a few straggling bulls were seen or killed, scarcely sufficient, indeed, to supply the wants of our numerous camp. The great variety of matter incidental to this journey with the united Indian camp, will appear, perhaps, more satisfactory if given in the same order in which it was entered in my diary; I therefore present you with an extract from it:—

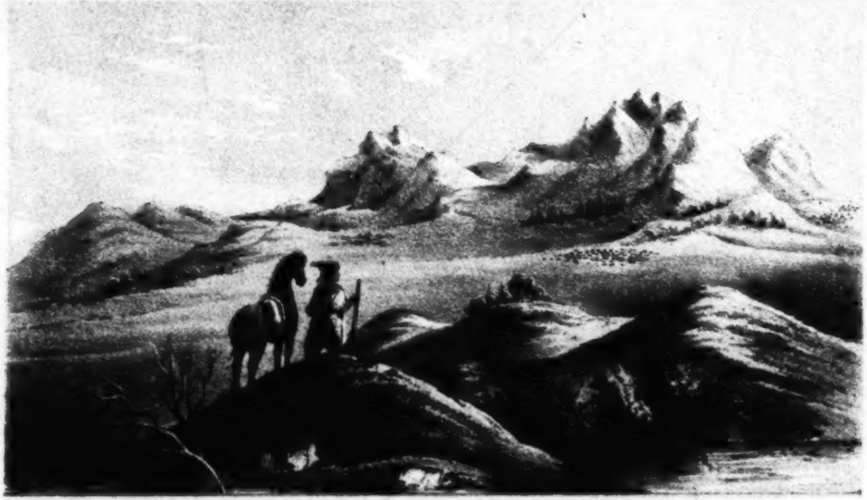
8th Sept., 1846. The elements of discord existing between the Nez-Percés and Black-Feet, there is every appearance of an open rupture. The Nez-Percés being evidently in the wrong, the Flat-Heads, following our example, endeavor to convince them of the impropriety of their conduct; but to no purpose, the principal man among them refusing, for the second time, to smoke the calumet of peace.

9th. Towards night a touching incident occurred in our lodge. A Nez-Percé chief, who declares himself our friend, entered, accompanied by three Black-Feet, a warrior, an interpreter, and a young man about twenty years of age. This youth, when about one year old, [illegible] both his parents; his mother, a captive among the Black-Feet, died the first days of her captivity; his father, whose country is far distant from the Black-Feet, is altogether lost to him. The poor orphan became the adopted child of a Black-Foot woman, who brought him up as she would her own offspring. The adopted son grew up, imbibing all the notions and customs of his new friends, knowing no other relations than those around him. To-day, the woman whom he believed to be his real mother, declared to him that she was not; and that his father, whom he had not seen since he was one year old, was now sitting beside him. "Who is my father?" he anxiously enquired. "There," said the woman, pointing to the Nez-Percé chief, who entered the lodge with him. The doubts of the father were soon removed, as he hastily stripped the youth's garments from his back, and there discovered the mark of a burn received in the parental lodge while yet an infant. The sudden burst of feeling elicited from these children of nature at this unexpected meeting, can be better imagined than described. The chief has no grown children, he is therefore the more eloquent in endeavoring to persuade his son to return to his native country, presenting him a the same time, with one of the best and most beautiful of his steeds. I joined to the entreaties of the father, the strongest motives I could urge. The son, whose heart is divided between nature and grace, begged to be allowed to bid farewell to the companions and friends of his youth, who were now absent—he could not, he declared, thus abruptly leave her who, with motherly care and anxiety, had watched over him so many years, and whom he had always so tenderly loved, and looked upon as his mother. "Now that the Black-gowns are with us," he said, "I desire to be of the happy number of those who are about to introduce them to my friends, and to listen to the words of the Great Spirit, whom they have come to announce. After that, but not before, shall I follow my father."

10th. The Nez-Percés announce their determination of leaving the united camp. The Flat-Heads, who dread more the presence of a friend capable of injuring their souls, than that of an enemy who can only hurt the body, are excessively rejoiced at this announcement. The Black-Feet also are highly pleased to see them go. The separation took place about 8 o'clock; but they had gone only a short distance from the camp, when, fearing an attack from the Crows, they rejoined the main body, determined to remain as long as the great hunt shall last. To avoid the outbreak, evidently threatened by the ill-will of the Nez-Percés, the Black-Feet have resolved to leave the camp on the morrow. This day I baptized a Nez-Percés, who had been shot in the late battle with the Crows—he cannot survive much longer.

11th. Farewell to the Flat-Heads. All came to shake hands with us, the grief of their hearts was depicted in their countenances; we all perceived how deeply they felt the separation. A great number of their cavaliers accompany us for a considerable distance; six go as far as our encampment, not less than twenty-five miles.

Our course lay through an extensive level plain, at the very base of the Muscle-shell mountains. These rise abruptly from the plain around, resembling broken, elevated islands in the midst of the ocean, and their tops tufted with a heavy growth of cedar and pines. While admiring the singular appearance of the scenery, my attention is called off to a very distressing accident. An old Indian is seen falling from his horse, receiving in the fall a severe wound between his eyes; he [illegible] to revive him are fruitless. It was the old Black-Foot chief, Nicholas, whom I baptized five years ago; he acted, ever since, the part of a most effective missionary, in preparing the way for the introduction of the gospel among his tribe. To-day he entered what he called his own country, chanting hymns of praise and thanksgiving in the happy anticipation of soon presenting us to his brethren. He dies! not even a sigh escapes him. Oh, how profound are the designs of God. Happily he leaves a son worthy of so excellent a sire. His attachment to religion equals that of his father. Having resided several years among the Flat-Heads, he has acquired a perfect knowledge of their language—acting in the capacity of interpreter, he has already rendered me considerable assistance. Notwithstanding his great grief, he performs the last sad offices near the tomb of his father with the composure and firmness of a Christian. It is customary among the Black-Feet to express their grief by wailings and lacerations of the body, calculated only to afflict those around, though intended by them as a mark of respect towards the lamented dead. The son of Nicholas, himself a chief and a great brave, following the Christian practice,



BUFFALOS DISCOVERED. Nº 1.

passes the night in prayer, with his wife and children, near the funeral couch of his father. His friends and brother, Pegans (pagan in name and in fact), would now and then gather around him, and kneeling beside the mourner, pour forth, Christian-like, many a pious ejaculation on behalf of their deceased chieftain. The remains of the venerable chief were placed in the grave by the hands of his own son, and over his tomb the emblem of salvation was raised—the cross of the Saviour, whose words were now for the first time announced to the lonely tribes of this long-benighted wilderness. At the very moment the last prayers of the funeral service were uttered, "May he rest in peace," a busy stir breaks the death-like silence of the surrounding crowd of Indians. A Flat-Head approached in full gallop, announcing the pleasing intelligence that two Black-Feet had reached their camp, and informed them that the tribe of Nicholas was within two days march of us.

12th. The very evening of the day on which Nicholas was interred, immense herds of buffalo are seen in the neighborhood of the camp. All are preparing for the chase—hunters throwing the lasso over their buffalo horses, already prancing and capering for a race—all ready to start; but before they separate, they halt for a moment, and, in imitation of the Flat-Heads, all are seen on their knees to beg of Almighty God their daily bread; when again mounted, off they bound at full speed, each for one, two, or three fat cows, according to the strength of his favorite steed. The supper was abundant in every lodge, regiments of steaks were paraded before all the fires. My fire was encircled with tongues, or other dainty dishes reserved for the Black-gown; and all who visited our lodge were of course invited to partake of the superabundant supply. Among my visitors, one in particular distinguished himself by his originality and good sense—his words were accompanied with expressive signs, which rendered his conversation very agreeable; he related to me what he observed while in the Flat-Head camp:—"When we first arrived," said he, "we had abundance of provisions with us, while the Flat-Heads and Nez-Percés were fasting; we were visited, and all partook of what we had. The Flat-Head differed from the Nez-Percés; the former prayed before he ate, the latter did not. On the Lord's-day, the Flat-Heads remained quiet in the lodges, they frequently prayed, and spoke to us words of the Great Spirit to make us good; but

A PRAYER FOR SUCCESS IN HUNTING

N° [illegible]

the Nez-Percés, painted, and proud of their feathers, were seen going here and there, more for evil than good, without reserve, before our young people. But then came the battle with the Crows, and the Nez-Percés, though the least brave of us all, and the least exposed, have had to weep over the loss of one of their men, and another is dying of his wounds. This made me believe the words I had heard the Flat-Head say, 'that the Great Spirit is good to the good, but that he can find the wicked at pleasure to punish them as they may deserve.'"

The wonderful success of the Flat-Heads in the different wars they have been compelled to wage, has confirmed their enemies in the persuasion entertained for some years, that the medicine of the Black-gowns is stronger than their own. Two Indians of the Pegan camp have just arrived, apprising us of their approach.

13th. Sunday.—We are obliged to move camp;—every dry stick had been burned where we passed the night, and the rain has rendered the only other substitute for fuel, buffalo dung, unfit for use;—the rain which was falling as we travelled, changed into sleet and hail. After a long day's march we encamp for the night, in a beautiful cotton grove, on the margin of the Judith river.

The bad weather prevented the re-union of the two camps; it will be so much the more remarkable, as to-morrow will be the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The chief enquires, if it would please us to see the Black-Feet manifest their joy in their own way, that is, by painting, singing and dancing; the answer was: "Do the best you can to show your friends that you are pleased." We learn by an express, just arrived, that the BIG LAKE, the great chief of the Pegans, harangued his people, exhorting them to behave orderly, and to listen with attention to all that the Fathers would say to them. He is accompanied by the great Tail-Bearer, a kind of orator, or aid-de-camp to the chief. His tail, composed of buffalo and horse-hair, is about seven or eight feet long, and instead of wearing it behind, according to the usual fashion, it is fastened above his forehead, and there formed into a spiral coil, resembling a rhinoceros' horn. Such a tail, among the Black-Feet, is a mark of great distinction and bravery—in all probability, the longer the tail, the braver the person.

14th. An agreeable disappointment. The Flat-Head camp, from which we separated four days ago, is only about ten miles from us. They sent an invitation to the Big Lake, desiring, at the same time, to trade with him on friendly terms. Opinions are divided among the people of the Big Lake. The chief is for postponing the trade until the meeting with the Black-gowns takes place; the Tail-Bearer gives the preference to trade. The chief's voice prevails. An Indian from the camp arrives about ten o'clock, to herald their approach; all the horses are immediately saddled, and the two Black-gowns, at the head of a numerous band of cavaliers, forming one extensive line, in single file, proceed through a beautiful open plain, the air resounding with songs of triumphal joy. We are soon in sight of each other—a loud discharge from all the guns was the signal to dismount, when the Big-Lake and Tail-Bearer, followed by the whole tribe, walked up to give us a warm and affectionate shake of the hand. Smoking came next; and after the friendly pipe had passed from mouth to mouth, and had made several rounds, they communicate to each other the news since parting. I made to them my preparatory address, to dispose their minds and hearts to listen with attention to the word of God. To this appeal they responded with a loud and cheerful expression of the satisfaction they felt in listening to the Black-gown. We had scarcely introduced our new friends into the camp, before the Flat-Heads and Nez-Percés were seen approaching. Their meeting was still more joyful and cordial than the one we had just witnessed among the people of the Big-Lake. This is not astonishing, when you know them; the savage is naturally reserved towards men he does not know. The candid, open ways of acting which distinguish our neophytes soon communicate themselves to the Black-Feet, and before the sun went down, Black-Feet, Flat-Heads, young and old, all show equal pleasure to find us, on such an occasion, in the midst of them.

After evening prayers were said in the Black-Foot and Flat-Head languages, I addressed to them a short discourse on the happy re-union and peaceful disposition that now existed between the two nations. What a pleasing sight! What a consoling triumph for religion, to behold those warriors, whose deep-scarred faces told of the many bloody battles they had had together,—who could never meet before but with feelings of deadly enmity, thirsting for each other's blood,—now bending the knee before their common Father in prayer, as with one heart, and listening with delight to the words of the peaceful Redeemer. The [illegible] and the principal men of both nations passed the evening in my lodge. VICTOR, the great Flat-Head chief, gains the good-will of all—charms everybody by the suavity and dignified simplicity of his manners. He relates some of his exploits, not indeed to appear conspicuous, as is evident from the modest and simple way in which he speaks, but to make them fully sensible of the protection which the Great Spirit extends to those who are devoted to His holy cause. The Black-Feet who were engaged in the late battle with the Crows, confirm the statements of Victor, and recount many edifying circumstances which they had witnessed in the Flat-Head camp. The making of the sign of the cross was highly extolled, as a certain sign of victory to those who had already given their hearts to the true God. It is truly to-day the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

15th. The Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. The new disciples of the cross assist at a solemn Mass, sung in the open plain, under the canopy of green boughs, to beg for the blessings of God upon this wilderness and its wandering tribes, and unite them in the bond of peace. Flat-Heads, Nez-Percés, Pegans, Blood Indians, Gros-Ventres and Black-Feet, number ing about two thousand, all surround the altar of the living God, on which "the clean oblation is offered," in their behalf. It is a thing unheard of, that among so many different savage nations, hitherto so inimical to one another, unanimity and joy, such as we now witness, should exist, —it appears as if their ancient deadly feuds had been long since buried in oblivion; and this is the more remarkable in an Indian who, it is well known, cherishes feelings of revenge for many years. How long will this last? May Heaven strengthen their present good-will, and grant them perseverance. Mention is already made of baptizing all the Pegan children, but the ceremony is postponed on account of the general rejoicing, and the affairs of business that now occupy the camp.

16th. The engaging simplicity and cordiality of the Flat-Head chiefs have gained them the affections of all the principal men of the Black-Feet tribe,—conduct the more remarkable, when contrasted with the turbulent disposition of the Nez-Percés, who are kept in check only by the presence of the Flat-Heads. At this second separation, they came again to renew their affection towards us. The Flat-Head chiefs remain last in the camp to see everything pass off entirely and cordially. In the evening the Black-Feet assemble around our fire where the first canticle is composed in their language; the subject of this composition is the commendation of their parents to the "Supreme Ruler of all things." Apistotokis Nina, Pikamini tokanothe akse pennamki tangitsose Aikeiowa siokanoke.

18th. Nothing very remarkable took place. We received the visit of a war party of Blood Indians, the most cruel among the Black-Feet. From them we learn that their tribe will be delighted to receive a visit from us—that our persons are considered sacred among them—that we need apprehend no danger, and, to remove all uneasiness on this head, that sixty of their children had already received baptism at the hands of a Black-gown, whom they met on the *Saskatchewan*, and that these children constantly wear the crosses and medals which the Black-gown gave them.

19th. News in great variety. Two Gros Ventres have been killed by the Crows. Seven families of Pegans have been followed by a numerous band of Crows, and have probably been destroyed. A chief, just arrived, informs us that Black-Feet of different tribes are assembling in the neighborhood of Fort Lewis to proceive their annual supplies, and that the traders who bring up the goods are distant only three days' journey, with three large canoes (Mackinaw boats). About two o'clock in the afternoon the camp prepares for another great hunt.

19th. Baptism was this day conferred on upwards of one hundred children and two old men, with all the usual ceremonies. To enter into a full description of these, calculated, as they are, to leave a deep and lasting impression upon the minds of all present, would be but a repetition of what has been already stated in my former letters on the like occasions.

20th. Arrival of a great war party of Blood Indians. They are returning from an expedition against the Crows, having carried off twenty-seven horses belonging to the latter. The leaders of this party, one a son, the other a brother of the great chief, exhibit towards us particular marks of friendship. The elder, who worshipped the sun and moon, has long since ceased to invoke these deities—he confirms the statement of the other party, that we shall meet with a hearty welcome among his tribe. The Black-Feet nation consists of about fourteen thousand souls, divided into six tribes, to wit: the *Pagans*, the *Surcees*, the *Blood Indians*, the *Gros-Ventres* (descendants of the Rapahos), the BLACK-FEET (proper), and the *Little Robes*. These last were almost entirely destroyed in 1845.

21st. A feast is given in my lodge to the new-comers. It is preceded by the baptism of a Pegan, who had been an old chief, but who, on account of age, resigned the dignity of his title in favor of his brother. He possesses the gift of speech in an eminent degree. He is daily here, repeating and commenting on the instructions given by us. He exercises over his flock a very happy influence, and it is, doubtless, owing to his exertions that the Pegans are the first among the Black-Feet tribe to manifest, favorable dispositions, and they will probably be the first also to embrace and put in practice the saving truths of Christianity. He presents, in his own person, a rare exception among his people, and indeed the only instance I have met with in my intercourse with the Indians, especially in one of his age—of an Indian having lived with one and the same wife, and with her also in perfect peace and harmony. He received in baptism the united name of IGNATIUS XAVIER, the medal having that impress—which he constantly wears, to remind him of the virtues which distinguish those saints. Let us hope that the first graces bestowed on this tribe may soon produce fruits of salvation to all.

29th. A day of great rejoicing—a dance. All the Indian fineries are produced, all the war-caps, adorned with eagle feathers, figure in the dance—a thousand voices join in the song—the rejoicing prolonged till evening. The common prayers have all been translated—already several know what is to be believed. May the practice of good soon take deep root in their hearts. Sata, our interpreter, acts the part of an Apostle—after each interpretation, he resumes his discourse, and speaking from the abundance of his heart, produces a powerful effect upon his audience. The word *Sata* does not differ in signification from *Satan*, and as the Indian generally receives his name from the natural disposition he manifests, we may safely conclude, when such a name is given to a Black-Foot, that the grace of God has operated most powerfully in converting this savage to what he is at present.

30th. Nothing remarkable happened, except a trial given to faith of the new catechumens. A theft of two horses was committed in the camp by a stranger, residing among the Flat-Heads. Some individuals from the western side of the mountains, occasionally forget what they should be; but a few isolated misdeeds, highly disapproved of by the entire nation, show to the best advantage the good spirit that animates the great mass of them. The critical position of the robber serves in some degree as an extenuation of his guilt. He had advanced a considerable distance from the Flat-Head camp, on his way to join us about the time we should reach the Black Indians; when he was given to understand that his life was in great danger from the war parties prowling in the rear. The poor fellow did not feel much inclined to meet death in this way, and his meagre horse not being very well able to avoid the meeting, *proprio motu* he left his, in exchange for two other horses, fully equal to the task of sweeping him past the danger. These horses will, however, be returned to the owner. This is not the first instance of restitution among the Indians.

Sept. 24th. The missionaries, accompanied by a great number of Indians, precede the camp on its way to Fort Lewis, now only a few miles off. I am accosted by a little Pegan chief, who invites me to smoke. He tells me that he has come to the determination of settling at the Fort an unfortunate personal difficulty between himself and another chief of the Blood Indian tribe. "I am going to meet," said he, "my mortal enemy, a Blood Indian chieftain, renowned for his courage, but much more for his wicked heart. He treacherously murdered a Nez-Percé, while under my protection. I should be dishonored forever if I did not avenge this shameful act, and wash the stain from my nation in his blood. I shot the murderer in his own lodge—he did not die—his wound is healed—he awaits my arrival, resolved to kill me. I dread him not, for I also am a chief. I have heard your words, and other feelings have crept over my heart. Black-gown, hear what I am about to do: I will present to him the best horse of my band to cover his wound; if he accepts it, well and good, if not, I must kill him." I offered myself as a mediator between them, before any steps should be taken, and promised him a favorable issue, according to the conviction of my own heart; for, as I had never witnessed the spilling of one drop of human blood, I felt assured that Almighty God would spare me the painful sight on the present occasion. We continue our route.. The little chief and his Pegan friends prepare their arrows and load their guns. When in sight of the Fort, two

Black-Feet came running up towards us, to tell the little chief that if he approached any further, or any of his people, their lives would be in danger; and they returned as they came, running to announce the arrival of the Black-gowns. The bell of the Fort is sending forth a solemn peal, to honor, as it subsequently appeared, the arrival of the Black-gowns—a mark of respect generally paid to a priest by its inmates, who are chiefly French Canadians and Spaniards. Heedless of the admonition we had received, we proceeded to the Fort in full gallop. The gates were thrown open. We received a hearty welcome from every white man in the Fort; the bourgeois being absent, soon returned, to add by their kindness and politeness to the warm reception we had already received at the hands of their tenants. The first compliments over, two horses were saddled for Father Point and myself, when we went over to an island formed by the waters of the Missouri, where the murderer and his band were encamped. The great neatness in the lodge of the latter, to whom I had already sent word, showed that it was prepared for our reception. We entered first, followed by our Pegan friends; then came the Blood Indians, and last of all the murderous chief, with a countenance far from serene—savage vengeance visibly lurking in his breast. He shook hands only with the Black-gowns, and sat down silent and surly. I explained to him the object of my visit, and pleaded strongly for a reconciliation, declaring, at the same time, that I would not leave his lodge until I should see them reconciled. He listened with much attention, made a very appropriate reply, and in finishing, he exclaimed: "all is forgiven and forgotten. How could my heart remain angry whilst I listened to thy words?" Confidence was quickly restored in the assembly, and his short but eloquent reply showed that there was eloquence everywhere when the heart speaks. The little chief who had first spoken of reconciliation ended his remarks by an action that was really moving; stepping up to the man who had been his mortal enemy, he tenderly embraced him, and then, in addition to other gifts, presented him with a beautifully-painted robe, wrought in porcupine. The calumet of peace was cheerfully lighted, and passed around several times. Conversation became animated and friendly, and each one left the council-house with a light and glad heart, more easily felt than described. The chiefs who were present on this occasion were: *Amakzikinne*, or the Big Lake; *Onistaiestamik*, or White Bull; *[illegible]*, or Bull-Crow; *Aiketzo*, or Grande [illegible]; *[illegible]*, or the wicked; *Akaniaki*, or the man who was beaten.

27th. Sunday, I offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, followed by an instruction on the end of man, at which all the inmates of Fort Lewis attended, together with as many Black-Feet as the large room and passage could contain. Many a tear escaped from the Canadian, the Creole, and the Spaniard, at the remembrance, no doubt, of the innocent and happy days they spent when young, in attending regularly to their religious duties. Many a pious resolution was lowly made on the present occasion, and their strict attention and devout feelings during divine service, showed that the germ of faith in them still gave promise of sanctifying, however far they may have wandered from the strict line of Christian rectitude. In the afternoon I administered, with all the ceremonies, the sacrament of baptism to thirty children.

From what I have seen, I am firmly convinced of the great good a missionary establishment would produce among the Black-Feet.

Assuredly it is a work well worthy the zeal of an apostle: to reclaim these savages from their cruel and bloody wars; to wrest them from the soul-destroying idolatry in which they are plunged, for they are worshippers of the sun and moon: and to teach them the consolatory truths of the Divine Redeemer of mankind, to which they seemed to listen with the utmost attention, and heartfelt satisfaction. Allow me the reflection, the ultimate fate of these fierce and lonely tribes is fixed at no distant date, unless looked to in time. What will become of them? The buffalo-field is becoming narrower from year to year, and each succeeding hunt finds the Indians in closer contact. It is highly probable that the Black-Feet plains, from the Sascatshawin to the Yellow-Stone, will be the last resort of the wild animals twelve years hence. Will these be sufficient to feed and clothe the hundred thousand inhabitants of these western wilds? The Crees, Black-Feet, Assiniboins, Crows, Snakes, Rickaries, and Sioux, will then come together and fight their bloody battles on these plains, and become themselves extinct over the last buffalo-steak. Let those, who have the power and the means, look to it in time. Let some efforts be made to rescue them from the threatened destruction, lest, by guilty negligence, the last drop of aboriginous blood indelibly stain the fair fame of the Spread Eagle, under whose protecting wing they are said to live. Justice makes the appeal.

After mature deliberation upon the various plans devised for the contemplated establishment, it was deemed more advisable that the Reverend Father Point should remain with the Black-Feet, and continue the instructions; while I should go to St. Louis and endeavor to procure the means necessary to establish a permanent mission among them. Accordingly, on the 28th, I took final leave of my companions, of the kind and polite gentlemen of the Fort, of all the Black-Feet then present, who ceased not, during my stay among them, to give me the most marked tokens of affectionate attachment. Our departure was honored by the Fort with a discharge of the guns, and amidst a thousand farewells we glided down the Missouri, from a point 2950 miles above its mouth.

We left the Fort about noon, and encamped 25 miles below, near Bird Island. Next day, while passing the bluffs, on whose steep declivities, numerous groups of the big-horn were browsing, we made a march upon an old buck that came to drink at the water's edge—the first of the many victims sacrificed to our necessities during this long trip. After passing the Maria and Saury rivers, we reach the remarkable formation, the yellow sand-stone walls, on both sides of the Missouri, exhibiting most fantastic shapes and fissures—urns, of various sizes and forms—tables of every description—rostrums, surrounded by mushrooms, pillars, forts, castles, and a multitude of other figures, which, for the greater part of this, and the whole of the following day, furnished to our almost bewildered fancies ample scope for comparisons and theories. We passed, on the 8th of October, the great Elk-horn steeple, near Porcupine Fork. I could not learn what extraordinary event this remarkable tower was intended to commemorate. Several thousand elk-horns have been here piled up, which formerly constituted, I have little doubt, the grand resort of numerous groups of these animals. On the 11th we arrived at Fort Union, 600 miles distant from Fort Lewis, this making about 50 miles a day. Here we met with a very warm reception. We availed ourselves of the kind offer given [illegible] us of resting a day at the Fort; while there I baptized five children. We left the Fort on the

15th, with two companions. Large herds of buffalo were seen on both sides of the river, and bears, deer and elks appeared at every bend, so that there is little danger of suffering from want at this season. On the 16th our ardor to press forward, in spite of a strong head-wind, was suddenly cooled by a side wind, which upset the skiff and ourselves in four feet of water. We were now satisfied that we had better wait for a more favorable wind, and improve the time by drying our clothes. We started quite refreshed in the afternoon, and made up for the lost time by running sixty miles the next day. On the 17th we met six lodges of Assiniboins; they received us very kindly in their little camp,—gave us a feast and abundance of provisions. The same day we met eight Gros-Ventres, who were also exceedingly kind to us, insisting on our accepting a lot of buffalo tongues. A favorable wind on the 18th, induced us to unfurl our sail. We were thus enabled to run about ten miles an hour, and early next day we reached Fort Berthold, where we were kindly entertained by Mr. Brugere. The Gros-Ventres have a village here. I found but a few families;—one of the chiefs invited me to a feast. On the 20th we were hailed by several bands of Indians, and kindly received. We proceeded, and encamped for the night near Knife river; but our fire discovered our encampment to a band of Indians. The discovery would have been fatal to us, had I not been fortunately recognized by them; for they came armed for destruction, and took us by surprise. As soon as the two leaders knew who I was, they embraced me affectionately; our alarm was soon quieted, and we passed the evening very agreeably in their company; a good smoke, a cup of well sweetened coffee, a few humps and buffalo tongues, put them in a very good humour. They made me a solemn promise, that they would, in future, never molest a white man. They were Arikaras. The next day we breakfasted at Fort Madison, with the good and kind-hearted Mr. Des Autel. Shortly after leaving this Fort, we passed under a scalp attached to the end of a long pole, which projected over the river. This was probably an offering to the sun, to obtain either fresh scalps or a good hunt. We were hailed by a large village of Arikaras, encamped and fortified on a point of land well timbered. They treated us with great kindness, earnestly pressing me to accept invitations to several buffalo feasts; and as time did not admit of such delay, their liberality fell little short of sinking the skiff, with the most dainty pieces of the hunt. Though late, we proceeded on our journey, principally, indeed, to avoid passing the night in feasting. Having had very favorable weather during the five following days, we reached, on the 26th, the encampment of Mr. Goule, an agent in the service of the American Fur Company. I baptized several half-breed children at this place.

Availing ourselves of the favorable weather the four following days, we kept on the river, drifting down every night, so that early on the 30th, we arrived at Fort Pierre. Mr. Picotte, of St. Louis, received us with the utmost cordiality and politeness. He forced me to remain three days under his hospitable roof. This delay enabled me to see a great number of Sioux, and baptize fifty-four children. Meanwhile Mr. Picotte ordered a large and convenient skiff to be made, and stored it with all sorts of provisions. In all my travels, I have never met one to surpass, perhaps to equal, the overflowing kindness with which this gentleman confers a favor. I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to him. May God bless and reward him. And, ind[illegible] must here add, as a token of my sincere gratitude, that in all the forts of the American Fur Company, the charitable liberality and kindness of the gentlemen were unbounded.

Late on the 3d November we renewed our journey, but had not proceeded far when we found it necessary to refit our skiff, which, being quite new, leaks considerably. We landed at a large farm belonging to the company on Fleury's Island. We freely used the permission given to us, and committed great havoc among the poultry. On the 5th we breakfasted at Mr. Rouis' Fort, where I baptized thirteen half-breed children—the day was beautiful and we made the whole of the Grande Detour. We arrived at Fort Look-Out, of which I found Mr. Campbell in charge. I baptized here sixteen half-breed children. I was kindly received by a a great number of Sioux. We encamped nine miles lower down at a trading post held by two Canadians, where I baptized four children. On the 10th we passed the entrance of Running-water river, a fine stream with a strong current. Two miles above its mouth were encamped one hundred families of the unhappy and much-abused Mormons—met several [illegible] about Great Island, where we encamp[illegible] favorable wind enabled us to reach Fort Vermillion on the 13th, four hundred miles below Fort Pierre. I baptized seven half-breed children. Mr. Hamilton liberally supplied us with provisions. On the 14th we saw a Mormon along the beach, who fled at our approach. We met two Canadians who had shot a fine turkey, which they gave me: in return I presented them with some coffee and sugar, rare articles in that country. A fine breeze brought us in sight of the old Council Bluffs on the 18th. The river has made considerable changes since my former visit to this place; entirely new beds have been formed. For several hundred miles, all the forests along the south side of the river were filled with cattle belonging to the Mormons. On the 19th we passed the ancient trading post, Lisel de Cabanne's—a few miles below is the new temporary settlement of the Mormons, about ten thousand in number. I was presented to their president, Mr. Young, a kind and polite gentleman. He pressed me very earnestly to remain a few days, an invitation which my limited time did not permit me to accept. The persecutions and sufferings endured by this unhappy people, will one day probably form a prominent part of the history of the Far-west. At sun-set we encamped at Mr. Sarpy's trading post, among the upper Potawotomies, where I met several of my old Indian friends, and among them Potogojecs, one of their chiefs, whose Indian legend of their religious traditions will form the subject of my next letter.

20th. A beautiful day—we visited our old friends in Bellevue, the good Mr. Papin and others. We passed the Papillion, the Mosquito, and the Platte rivers, and encamped near Table Creek.

On the 23d we arrived at St. Joseph's, the highest town in Missouri. It is now in a most thriving and prosperous condition; much improved indeed since I last saw it.

28th. We arrived at West-Port, from which I proceeded by stage to St. Louis, the termination of a trip which occupied just two months. I recommend myself to your prayers.

I remain, with sentiments of profound respect and esteem, your obedient servant and brother in Christ.

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXV.

A. M. D. G.

LEGEND OF THE POTAWOTOMIE INDIANS.

St. Louis University,
January 10, 1847.

Very Rev. and Dear Father Provincial,—Agreeably to my promise, I send you the account given by the Potawotomies, residing at Council Bluffs, respecting their own origin, and the causes which gave rise to their "great medicine," and juggling, considered by them as of the highest antiquity. Such superstitions, indeed, are found to exist among all the tribes of the American continent, differing only in the form and the accompanying ceremonies. The Nanaboojoo of the Potawotomies, the Wieska of the Objibbeways, the Wizakeshak of the Crees, the Santeux and the Black-Feet, the Etalapasse of the Tchinouks on the coast of the Pacific, can, among these different tribes, be traced up to the same personage.

I send it *verbatim*, as it was communicated to me by Potogojecs, one of the most intelligent chiefs of the Potawotomie nation. Though fabulous, it is not entirely devoid of interest; it should excite us to offer up our prayers the more fervently to the Great Father of Light, for these poor benighted children of the forest, and beg of Him to send good and worthy laborers into this vast vineyard. Having enquired of this chief what he thought of the Great Spirit, of the Creator, and of the origin of his religion, or great medicine, he replied as follows: "I will give you a faithful account of what my tribe believes in these matters. We have not, like you, books to transmit our traditions to our children; it is the duty of the old men of the nation to instruct the young people in whatever relates to their belief, and their happiness.

"Many among us believe, that there are two Great Spirits who govern the universe, but who are constantly at war with each other. One is called the *Kchemnito*, that is, the Great Spirit, the other *Mchemnito*, or the Wicked Spirit. The first is goodness itself, and his beneficent influence is felt everywhere; but the second is wickedness personified, and does nothing but evil. Some believe that they are equally powerful, and, through fear of the Wicked Spirit, offer to him their homage and adoration. Others, again, are doubtful which of them should be considered the more powerful, and accordingly endeavor to propitiate both, by offering to each an appropriate worship. The greater part, however, believe as I do, that *Kchemnito* is the first principle, the first great cause, and consequently ought to be all-powerful, and to whom alone is due all worship and adoration; and that *Mchemnito* ought to be despised and rejected!

"Kchemnito at first created a world, which he filled with a race of beings having nothing but the appearance of men—perverse, ungrateful, wicked dogs—that never raised their eyes to heaven to implore the assistance of the Great Spirit. Such ingratitude aroused him to anger, and he plunged the world in a great lake, where they were all drowned. His anger thus appeased, he withdrew it from the waters, and created anew a beautiful young man, who, however, appeared very sad, and being dissatisfied with his solitary condition, grew weary of life. Kchemnito took pity on him, and gave him, during sleep, a sister, as a companion to cheer his loneliness. When he awoke and saw his sister he rejoiced exceedingly—his melancholy instantly disappeared. They spent their time in agreeable conversation and amusement, living for many years together in a state of innocence and perfect harmony, without the slighest incident to mar the happiness of their peaceful solitude.

"The young man had a dream, for the first time, which he communicated to his sister, 'Five young men,' said he, 'will come this night, and rap at the door of the lodge—the Great Spirit forbids you to laugh, to look at them, or give an answer to any of the first four, but laugh, look, and speak, when the fifth presents himself.' She acted according to his advice. When she heard the voice of the fifth, she opened the door to him, laughing at the same time very heartily; he entered immediately, and became her husband. The first of the five strangers, called Sama, (tobacco,) having received no answer, died of grief; the three others, Wapekone, (pumpkin,) Eshketamok, (water-melon,) and Kojees, (the bean,) shared the fate of their companion. Taaman, (maize,) the bridegroom, buried his four companions, and from their graves there sprung up, shortly after, pumpkins, water-melons, beans, and tobacco.

plants in sufficient abundance to supply their wants during the whole year, and enable them to smoke to the manitous, and in the council. From this union are descended the American Indian nations.

"A great manitou came on earth, and chose a wife from among the children of men. He had four sons at a birth; the first born was called Nanaboojoo, the friend of the human race, the mediator between man and the Great Spirit; the second was named Chipiapoos, the man of the dead, who presides over the country of the souls; the third, Wabosso, as soon as he saw the light, fled towards the north, where he was changed into a white rabbit, and under that name is considered there as a great manitou; the fourth was Chakekenapok, the man of flint, or fire-stone. In coming into the world he caused the death of his mother.

"Nanaboojoo, having arrived at the age of manhood, resolved to avenge the death of his mother, (for among us revenge is considered honorable); he pursued Chakekenapok all over the globe. Whenever he could come within reach of his brother, he fractured some member of his body, and after several rencounters, finally destroyed him by tearing out his entrails. All fragments broken from the body of this man of stone then grew up into large rocks; his entrails were changed into vines of every species, and took deep root in all the forests; the flint-stones scattered around the earth indicate where the different combats took place. Before fire was introduced among us, Nanaboojoo taught our ancestors how to form hatchets, lances, and the points of arrows, in order to assist us in killing our enemies in war, and animals for our food. Nanaboojoo and his brother, Chipiapoos, lived together retired from the rest of mankind, and were distinguished from all other beings by their superior qualities of body and mind. The manitous that dwell in the air, as well as those who inhabit the earth and the waters, envied the power of these brothers, and conspired to destroy them. Nanaboojoo discovered and eluded their snares, and warned Chipiapoos not to separate himself from him a single moment. Notwithstanding this admonition, Chipiapoos ventured alone one day upon Lake Michigan; the manitous broke the ice, and he sank to the bottom, where they hid the body. Nanaboojoo became inconsolable when he missed his brother from his lodge; he sought him everywhere in vain, he waged war against all the manitous, and precipitated an infinite number of them into the deepest abyss. He then wept, disfigured his person, and covered his head, as a sign of his grief, during six years, pronouncing from time to time, in sad and mournful tones, the name of the unhappy Chipiapoos.

"While this truce continued, the manitous consulted upon the means best calculated to appease the anger of Nanaboojoo, without, however, coming to any conclusion; when four of the oldest and wisest, who had had no hand in the death of Chipiapoos, offered to accomplish the difficult task. They built a lodge close to that of Nanaboojoo, prepared an excellent repast, and filled a calumet with the most exquisite tobacco. They journeyed in silence towards their redoubted enemy, each carrying under his arm a bag, formed of the entire skin of some animal, an otter, a lynx, or a beaver, well provided with the most precious medicines, (to which, in their superstitious practices, they attach a supernatural power). With many kind expressions, they begged that he would condescend to accompany them. He arose immediately, uncovered his head, washed himself, and followed them. When arrived at their lodge, they offered him a cup containing a dose of their medicine, preparatory to his initiation. Nanaboojoo swallowed the contents at a single draught, and found himself completely restored. They then commenced their dances and their songs; they also applied their medicine bags, which, after gently blowing them at him, they would then cast on the ground; at each fall of the medicine bag, Nanaboojoo perceived that his melancholy, sadness, hatred, and anger disappeared, and affections of an opposite nature took possession of his soul. They all joined in the dance and song—they ate and smoked together. Nanaboojoo thanked them for having initiated him in the mysteries of their grand medicine.

"The manitous brought back the lost Chipiapoos, but it was forbidden him to enter the lodge; he received, through a chink, a burning coal, and was ordered to go and preside over the region of souls, and there, for the happiness of his uncles and aunts, that is, for all men and women, who should repair thither, kindle with this coal a fire which should never be extinguished.

"Nanaboojoo then re-descended upon earth, and, by order of the Great Spirit, initiated all his family in the mysteries of the grand medicine. He procured for each of them a bag well furnished with medicines, giving them strict orders to perpetuate these ceremonies among their descendants, adding at the same time, that these practices, religiously observed, would cure their maladies, procure them abundance in the chase, and give them complete victory over their enemies. (All their religion consists in these superstitious practices, dances and songs; they have the most implicit faith in these strange reveries.)

"Nanaboojoo is our principal intercessor with the Great Spirit; he it was that obtained for us the creation of animals for our food and raiment. He has caused to grow those roots and herbs which are endowed with the virtue of curing our maladies, and of enabling us, in time of famine, to kill the wild animals. He has left the care of them to Mesakkummikokwi, the great-grandmother of the human race, and in order that we should never invoke her in vain, it has been strictly enjoined on the old woman never to quit the dwelling. Hence, when an Indian makes the collection of roots and herbs which are to serve him as medicines, he deposits, at the same time, on the earth, a small offering to Mesakkummikokwi. During his different excursions over the surface of the earth, Nanaboojoo killed all such animals as were hurtful to us, as the mastodon, the mammoth, etc. He has placed four beneficial spirits at the four cardinal points of the earth, for the purpose of contributing to the happiness of the human race. That of the north procures for us ice and snow, in order to aid us in discovering and following the wild animals. That of the south gives us that which occasions the growth of our pumpkins, melons, maize and tobacco. The spirit placed at the west gives us rain, and that of the east gives us light, and commands the sun to make his daily walks around the globe. The thunder we hear is the voice of spirits, having the form of large birds, which Nanaboojoo has placed in the clouds. When they cry very loud we burn some tobacco in our cabins, to make them a smoke-offering and appease them.

"Nanaboojoo yet lives, resting himself after his labors, upon an immense flake of ice, in the Great Lake, (the North Sea). We fear that the whites will one day discover his retreat, and drive him off, then the end of the world is at hand, for as soon as he puts foot on the earth, the whole universe will take fire, and every living creature will perish in the flames!"

In their festivities and religious assemblies, all their songs turn upon some one or other of these fables. When the chief had finished this history, I asked him whether he had any faith in what he had just related. "Assuredly I have, for I have had the happiness to see and entertain three old men of my nation, who penetrated far into the north, and were admitted into the presence of Nanaboojoo, with whom they conversed a long time. He confirmed all that I have recounted to you!"

Our savages believe that the souls of the dead, in their journey to the great prairie of their ancestors, pass a rapid current, over which the only bridge is a single tree, kept constantly in violent agitation, managed, however, in such a way, that the souls of perfect men pass it in safety, whilst those of the wicked slip off the tree into the water and are lost forever.

Such is the narration given to me by the Potawotomi chief, comprising all the articles of the creed held by this tribe, we can hardly fail to recognize in it, much obscured by the accumulation of ages, the tradition of the universal deluge, of the creation of the universe, of Adam and Eve; even some traces of the incarnation are found in the birth of Nanaboojoo, he was descended of parents, one of whom only, his mother, was of the human race; he is, moreover, the intercessor between God and man.

I recommend myself to your prayers.

I remain, with sentiments of profound respect and esteem, your obedient humble servant and brother in Christ.

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXVI.

A. M. D. G.

Philadelphia, April 6th, 1847.

Mr. J. D. Bryant,

Dear Sir,—The nation of the Pawnees is divided into four great tribes, which act in concert as one people. They have their villages upon the river Platte, or Nebrasca, and its tributaries, about 150 miles west of the Missouri river. They are the same true children of the desert as they have been these many ages.—They dress in the skins of animals killed in the chase. They cultivate maize and squashes, using the shoulder-blade of the buffalo as a substitute for the plough and hoe. In the season of the chase, a whole village, men, women, and children, abandon their settlements and go in pursuit of the animals whose flesh supplies them with food. Their huts, which they call akkaros, are circular, and about 140 feet in circumference. They are ingeniously formed by planting young trees at suitable distances apart, then bending and joining their tops to a number of pillars or posts fixed circularly in the centre of the enclosure. The trees are then covered with bark, over which is thrown a layer of earth, nearly a foot in thickness, and finally, a solid mass of green turf completes the structure. These dwellings, thus completed, resemble hillocks. A large aperture in the top serves to admit the light and also to emit the smoke. They are very warm in winter, and cool, but oftentimes very damp, in summer. They are large enough to contain ten or a dozen families.

If, in the long journeys which they undertake in search of game, any should be impeded, either by age or sickness, their children or relations make a small hut of dried grass to shelter them from the heat of the sun or from the weather, leaving as much provision as they are able to spare, and thus abandon them to their destiny. Nothing is more touching than this constrained separation, caused by absolute necessity—the tears and cries of the children on the one hand, and the calm resignation of the aged father or mother on the other. They often encourage their children not to expose their own lives in order to prolong their short remnant of time. They are anxious to depart on their long journey, and to join their ancestors in the hunting-grounds of the Great Spirit. If, some days after, they are successful in the chase, they return as quickly as possible to render assistance and consolation. These practices are common to all the nomadic tribes of the mountains.

The Pawnees have nearly the same ideas concerning the universal deluge as those which I have given of the Potawotomies. In relation to the soul, they say, that there is a resemblance in the body which does not die, but detaches itself when the body expires. If a man has been good during this life, kind to his parents, a good hunter, a good warrior, his soul (*sa ressemblance*) is transported into a land of delights, abundance, and pleasures. If, on the contrary, a man has been wicked, hard-hearted, cruel and indolent, his soul passes through narrow straits, difficult and dangerous, into a country where all is confusion, contrariety and unhappiness.

In their religious ceremonies, they dance, sing and pray before a bird stuffed with all kinds of roots and herbs used in their superstition. They have a fabulous tradition, which teaches them that the morning star sent this bird to their ancestors, as its representative, with orders to invoke it on all important occasions and to exhibit it in times of sacrifice. Before the invocation, they fill the calumet with the sacred herb contained in the bird. They then puff out the smoke towards the star, offer the prayers and make their demands, dancing and singing, and celebrating in verses the great power of the bird. They implore its assistance and its favor, whether to obtain success in hunting or in war, or to demand snow in order to make the buffalo descend from the mountains, or to appease the Great Spirit when a public calamity befalls the nation, or a family, or even a single person. The Pawnees are one of the few aboriginal tribes, which, descending from the ancient Mexicans, are guilty of offering human sacrifices. In order to justify this barbarous practice, they say that the morning star taught them by means of the bird, that such sacrifices were agreeable to it, and would bring down upon the nation the favor of the great Deliberator* of the universe. They are firmly persuaded that human sacrifices are most agreeable to the Great Spirit. Hence, when the Pawnee takes a prisoner and wishes to render himself acceptable to Heaven, he devotes it to the morning star. At the time of sacrifice, he delivers the prisoner over into the hands of the jugglers; soon after which, commence the ceremonies preparatory to the offering. I was in the neighborhood when one of these bloody sacrifices took place, and the particulars, which I am about to relate, were reported to me by worthy eye-witnesses.

---

* A name which they give to the Great Spirit.

The victim in this horrid transaction was a young Sioux girl, named Dakotha, aged 15 years, who had been taken prisoner by the Pawnees about six months previous to her immolation. During the months of her captivity, Dakotha received from the Pawnees every mark of regard which savages are capable of bestowing. She was an honored guest at all the *fêtes* and *festivities* of the village; and everywhere was treated, in appearance at least, rather as a fond friend than as a prisoner. It is the custom thus to prepare the victim, in order to conceal their infernal design.

The month of April being the season for planting, is on that account selected for the offering of their abominable sacrifices. To this end, four of the principal savages of the tribe assemble in the largest and most beautiful akkaro or hut, to deliberate with Tirawaat, or the great Deliberator of the universe, concerning the sacrifice of the victim. According to their belief, a human offering is rewarded by him with an abundant harvest, he fills the hunting-grounds convenient to their villages with immense herds of buffaloes, deer and antelopes, thus enabling them to kill their prey with more facility and with less risk of coming in contact with other warlike and hostile nations.

The oldest savage of the tribe presides at the feast given on the occasion. Ten of the best singers and musicians, each with his peculiar instrument, squat in the middle of the akkaro. Four of them have dried calabashes in their hands, from which the seeds have been extracted and small pebbles placed in their stead, which being shaken by the muscular arms of these gigantic savages, produce a sound like falling hail. Four others beat their tekapiroutche—this is a kind of drum of a most mournful and deafening sound; it is made from the trunk of a tree and is about three feet long and one-and-a-half broad, covered at both ends with deer skin. The remaining two have a kind of flute made of reeds, about two feet long and one inch in diameter, instruments, such as were used by the ancient shepherds, and which give forth sounds that may be heard at the distance of half a mile. They fasten to each instrument a little tewaara, or medicine bag, filled with roots and other materials, to which, in their superstitious rites, they attach a supernatural power, that renders their offering more agreeable to the Author of life. Four sentinels, each armed with a lance, take their position at the four cardinal points of the lodge, to maintain order among the spectators and to prevent the entrance of the women, young girls and children. The guests are seated upon the ground or upon mats on the right and left of the presiding juggler, turning around from time to time in the most grotesque and ridiculous dances. Imagine thirty swarthy savages, with their bodies tattooed; their faces besmeared with paint—white, black, made of soot and the scrapings of the kettles, yellow, green and vermilion; and their long and dishevelled hair clotted with mud or clay. Placing themselves in a circle, they shriek, they leap, and give to their bodies, their arms, their legs, and their heads a thousand hideous contortions; while streams of perspiration, pouring down their bodies, render the horrors of their appearance still more dreadful, by the confused commingling of the colors with which they are smeared—now they crowd together pell-mell, then separate, some to the right, some to the left, one upon one foot, another upon two, while others go on all-fours without order, and although without the appearance of measure, yet, in perfect harmony with their drums, their calabashes and their flutes.

Near the centre of the hut, at about four feet from the fire-place, are placed four large buffalo heads, dissected, in order that they may take the augury. The presiding juggler, the musicians and the dancers have their heads covered with the down of the swan, which sticks to them by means of honey, with which they smear their hair—a practice common to all the tribes of North America in their superstitious rites. The president or presiding juggler alone is painted with red, the musicians, one half red and the other half black, while all the others are daubed with all colors, and in the most fantastic figures.

Each time that the music, the songs and the dances are performed, the spectators observe the most profound silence, and during the space of thirty minutes that the extraordinary charivari continues, nothing is heard but the chants, the cries, the howlings and the music. When all have figured in the dance, the presiding juggler gives the signal to stop, crying out with all the force of his lungs. Immediately all cease, each one takes his place, and the auditory responds: "Néva! Néva! Néva!" it is well, it is well, it is well! The dancers then fill the ancient nawishkaro, or religious calumet, which is used only upon occasions the most important. They offer it to the president, who, striking with both his hands the long pipe, adorned with pearls and worked with different figures, goes and squats himself down by the fire-place. One of the guards places a coal upon the mysterious calumet. Having lighted it, he rises and gives a puff to each of the musicians without once slacking his hold from the pipe. He then turns towards the centre, and raising his eyes towards heaven, he offers the calumet to the Master of life, resting for a moment in majestic silence: then, offering three puffs to heaven, he speaks these words: "O, Tirawaat! Thou who beholdest all things, smoke with thy children, and take pity on us." He then offers the calumet to the buffalo heads, their grand manitous, salutes each of them with two puffs, and then goes to empty the bowl of the pipe in a wooden dish prepared for that purpose, that the sacred ashes may be afterwards gathered and preserved in a deer-skin pouch.*

After the dance, the master of ceremonies serves up the repast to the guests, seated in a circle. The food consists of dried buffalo meat and boiled maize, served in wooden plates, filled to the brim. Each one is bound to empty his plate, even should he expose himself to the danger of death from indigestion. The president offers a portion of the meat and maize to the Great Spirit, and places it accordingly upon the ground, and he then makes a similar offering to one of the buffalo heads, which is supposed to be a party to the feast. At length, while each one occupies himself with doing honor to his plate, one of the chiefs of the band rises up and announces to all the guests that the Master of life dances with him, and that he accepts the calumet and the feasting. All the band reply: "Néva! Néva! Néva!" This is the first condemnation.

---

* This method of smoking is in great repute among all the savages of the West. It is of the same importance and equally as binding as an oath among civilised nations. If two savages, ready to kill each other, can be induced to accept the calumet, the dispute ceases, and the bond of their friendship becomes stronger than ever.

The repast ended, they again dance, after which the calumet is lighted the second time; and, as in the former instance, is offered to the Master of life and to the buffalo heads, upon which, the lodge again resounds with the triple cry, "Nêva!" This last dance condemns, without appeal, the unfortunate victim whose immolation is invoked.

After all their grotesque dances, their cries, their chants and their vociferations, the savages, preceded by the musicians, go out of the lodge, to present the sacred calumet to the buffalo heads placed on the tops of the lodges of the village, each of which is ornamented with from two to eight heads, preserved as the trophies of their skill in the chase. At each puff the multitude raise a furious cry, for now the whole village joins in the extraordinary procession. They stop before the lodge of the Sioux girl, and make the air resound with the horrible imprecations against their enemies and against the unfortunate and innocent victim, who represents them on the present occasion. From this moment she is guarded by two old satellites, whose office it is to beguile her from the least suspicion that she is the victim for the coming sacrifice; and whose duty it also is to entertain her upon the great feast, they prepare on the occasion in her honor, and that she may be well fed in order to appear more beautiful and fat, and thereby more agreeable to the Master of life. This ends the first day of the ceremonies.

On the second day, two old female savages, with dishevelled hair, their faces wrinkled and daubed with black and red paint, their naked arms and legs tattooed, barefooted, and with no other dress than a deer-skin petticoat, extending down to the knee—in a word, two miserable-looking beldams, capable of striking terror in any beholder,—issue from their huts with pipes in their hands, ornamented with the scalps which their husbands have taken from their unhappy enemies. Passing through the village, they dance around each akkaro, solemnly announcing, "that the Sioux girl has been given to the Master of life by wise and just men, that the offering is acceptable to him, and that each one should prepare to celebrate the day with festivity and mirth." At this announcement, the idlers and children of the village move about and shout with joy. They then, still dancing, re-conduct the two old squaws to their huts, before which they place their pikes as trophies, and enter.—All then return to their own lodge, to partake of the feasts of their relatives.

About ten o'clock in the morning of the third day, all the young women and girls of the village, armed with hatchets, repair to the lodge of their young and unhappy captive, and invite her to go into the forest with them to cut wood. —The simple-hearted, confiding child, accepts their malicious invitation with eagerness and joy, happy to breathe once more the pure air.— They then give her a hatchet, and the female troop advance towards the place marked out in the dance, making the forest resound with shouts of joy. Atipaat, an old squaw who conducted them, designates, by a blow of the hatchet, the tree which is to be cut down. Each then gives it one blow, after which the victim approaches to complete the work. As soon as she commences what seems to her but pastime, the whole crowd of young furies surround her, howling and dancing. Unconscious that the tree is to supply the wood for her own sacrifice, the poor child pursues her work as if a great honor had been reserved for her.— Atipaat, the old woman, then fastens to her the ashki* with which to draw the wood.

---

* The ashki is a cord, made of horse-hair or of the bark of the elm, which they prepare by boiling it in cold water. It

The troop then lead the way towards the village, dancing as they pass along, but giving the hapless victim almost no assistance in dragging her load. An innumerable multitude attend them to the place of sacrifice, and receive them with loud acclamations. They there relieve her of her burden and again place her in the hands of the guards, who, with voices harsh and quivering, chant the great deeds of their younger days and re-conduct her to her lodge. In the meantime the whole band assist to arrange the wood between two trees, after which they immediately disperse.

On the morning of the fourth day, before sunrise, a savage visits all the lodges to announce to each family, in the name of the Master of life, that they must furnish two billets of wood about three feet long for the sacrifice.

Then thirty warriors issue from their lodges, decked in all sorts of accoutrements; their heads adorned with deer and buffalo horns, with the tails of horses and the plumes of the

---

varies from twenty-five to sixty feet in length, and, although it is but about one inch in thickness, it is strong enough to bind the most powerful man. This they adorn with the quills of the porcupine, and with little bells. The bells, besides for the sake of ornament, are intended to give notice in case the victim makes any efforts to escape.

eagle and heron, interwoven with their scalp-locks, while the tails of wolves and wild cats stream from various parts behind, as the wings of Mercury are represented, with pendants hanging from their noses and ears, so elongated by the weight of the ornaments suspended to them, that they float about and strike against their shoulders.—Glass beads, or necklaces of brass or steel adorn their necks, while highly-ornamented deer-skin leggins and curiously-painted buffalo-skins, negligently thrown over their shoulders, complete their grotesque habiliments. Thus accoutred they present themselves at the hut of their captive, who is already adorned with the most beautiful dress their fancy can devise, or the materials at their command produce. Her head-dress is composed of the feathers of the eagle and swan, and descends behind in gracefully waving curves, even to the ground. Her person is properly painted with red and black lines. A frock of deer-skin descends to the knee, while a beautiful pair of leggins extend from thence to the ankle. A pair of moccasins garnished with porcupine quills, pearl and glass beads, are on her feet. Pendants hang from her ears and nose, a necklace ornaments her neck, and bracelets her arms;

nothing was spared that could add to her beauty.

Tranquillity and joy distinguishes her as she approaches the grand feast, which she has been made to believe her kind guardians have prepared to honor her. At the first cry of the warriors, the poor child comes out of the hut and walks at the head of her executioners, who follow in single file. As they pass along they enter into all the huts, where the most profound silence and the utmost propriety reign. The Sioux girl walks around the fire-place, her followers do the same, and, just as she leaves the lodge, the principal squaw gives her two billets of wood, which the unconscious victim gives in her turn to each of the savages. In this manner, when she has been made collect all the wood to serve for her immolation, she takes her place in the rear of the band, joyous and content that she has had the happiness to contribute to the pleasure of her executioners; after which they again restore her to her two guards, to be presented with her last repast, which consists of a large plate of maize.

All now wait in anxious expectation to witness the last scene of the bloody drama. The whole village is in commotion. Everywhere the warriors, old and young, may be seen preparing their murderous arrow, as upon the eve of a battle. Some practice shooting at a mark; the more barbarous, thirsting for the blood of their enemies, encourage and instruct their children in the use of the bow and arrow, and what part of the body they ought to strike.—The young women and girls devote themselves to clearing away the bushes and preparing the place of sacrifice, after the accomplishment of which, they employ themselves during the rest of that day and night in polishing their necklaces, pendants and bracelets, and all the other ornaments in which they wish to appear at the great feast.

On the fifth day, an aid-de-camp of Lechartetowarouchte, or the chief of sacrifice, ran through the village to announce, in the name of his master, the necessity of preparing the red and black paint, which is to serve for the grand ceremony. It is vain to attempt to give you, my dear sir, an adequate description of this personage, either as regards his costume, his figure, or his manner; it is every thing that a savage can invent of the fantastic, the ridiculous and the frightful, united in one person. The collector of colors himself scarcely yields to his comrade in monstrosity. He has the appearance of one, truly, just escaped from the infernal regions. His body is painted black, which, contrasted with the whiteness of his teeth and of his huge eyes, and with his hair besmeared with white clay, and bristling like the mane of a lion, gives him an aspect terrible and ferocious in the extreme. At each heel is fastened the tail of a wolf, and on his feet a pair of moccasins made of buffalo skin, with the long shaggy hair on the outside. He passes through the whole village with a measured step, holding a wooden plate in each hand. He enters the huts successively, and, as he approaches the fire-place, he cries aloud: "The Master of life sends me here." Immediately, a woman comes and empties into one of his plates either some red or some black paint, which she had prepared. Upon the reception of which, he raises his eyes to heaven, and with a loud voice says: "Regard the love of thy children, O Tirawaat! However poor, all that they possess is thine, and they give it to thee. Grant us an abundant harvest. Fill our hunting-grounds with buffaloes, deer, stags and antelopes. Make us powerful against our enemies, so that we may again renew this great sacrifice." Each one replies by the usual exclamation: "Néva! Néva! Néva!"

After the return of the collector of colors, and before sunrise, the last scene commences. Men and women, boys and girls, daub themselves in all the colors and forms imaginable. They deck themselves in whatever they possess which in their estimation is either beautiful or precious—pearls, beads, porcelain collars, the claws of the white bear, (this is in their view the most costly and valuable decoration) bracelets and pendants; nothing is forgotten on this occasion. They ornament their hair with the feathers of the heron, and of the gray eagle, a bird superstitiously venerated by them. Thus equipped for their sortie, they listen attentively for the first signal to the sacrifice.

While these preparations are in progress, the Towaarouchte, a religious band of distinguished warriors, known in the procession by the down of swans upon their hair or upon the tops of their heads, and by their naked bodies painted in red and black lines, follow the braves of the nation armed with their bows and arrows, which are sedulously concealed beneath their buffalo robes. Thus they approach the lodge where the unconscious victim awaits, as she thinks, the happy moment for the festivities given in her honor, to commence. She is now delivered into the hands of her executioners, dressed in the beautiful costume of the previous day, with the addition of a cord tied to each ankle. The poor child is all interest and in a kind of impatience to participate in the grand festivities. She smiles as she looks round upon the most cruel and the most revengeful enemies of her race. Not the slightest agitation, fear, or suspicion, is visible in her manner. She walks with joy and confidence in the midst of her executioners. Arrived at the fatal spot, a frightful presentiment flashes across her mind. There is no one of her own sex present. In vain do her eyes wander from place to place, in order to find the evidences of a feast. Why that solitary fire? And those three posts, which she herself drew from the forest, and which she saw fastened between two trees, and those swarthy figures of the warriors, what can they mean? All, all indicate some dreadful project. They order her to mount the three posts. She hesitates, she trembles as an innocent lamb prepared for the slaughter. She weeps most bitterly and with a voice the most touching, such as must have broken any other hearts than those of these savage men, she implores them not to kill her. With a persuasive tone they endeavor to convince her that their intention is not to injure her, but that the ceremonies in which she participates are indispensable before the grand feast. One of the most active of the savages unrolls the cords tied to her wrists and assists her to mount the post. He passes the cords over the branches of the two trees, between which the sacrifice is to be made.

These are rendered firm by the powerful arms of the other savages, and her feet immediately fastened to the topmost of the three posts, which she had unconsciously cut and drawn to the fatal spot. On the instant all doubt of their intentions vanishes from her mind. The savages no longer conceal from her their frightful project. She cries aloud, she weeps, she prays; but her supplications, her tears and her prayers are alike drowned in the melée, and cry of their horrible imprecations against her nation.

Upon her innocent and devoted head they concentrate the full measure of their vengeance, of all the cruelties, of all the crimes, of all the injustice and cruelty of the Sioux, which may have taken place in their most cruel and protracted wars, and which from time immemorial had been transmitted from father to son, as a precious heritage of vengeance and resentment. In a manner the most furious and most triumphant they exult with leaping and howling, like wild beasts, around their trembling victim. They then despoil her of all her ornaments and of her dress, when the chief of the sacrifice approaches and paints one-half of her body black and the other half red, the colours of their victims. He then scorches her armpits and sides with a pine-knot torch. After these preparatory rites, he gives the signal to the whole tribe, who make the air resound with the terrible war-cry of the Sassaskwi. At this piercing cry, which freezes the heart with terror, which paralyzes the timid and rouses the ardor of the brave, which confounds the buffalo in his course, and fills the bear with such fear as to take from him all the power of resisting or fleeing from his enemies, the savages, impatient and greedy for blood, issue from their dark lodges. Like a terrific hurricane they rush headlong to the fatal spot. Their cries, mingled with the noise of their feet, resemble the roar of thunder, increasing as the storm approaches. As a swarm of bees surround their queen, these Pawnee savages encompass the Sioux child—their trembling victim. In the twinkling of an eye, their bows are bent and their arrows adjusted to the cords. The arrow of Lecharitetewarouchte, or chief of the sacrifice, is the only one which is barbed with iron. With this, it is his province to pierce the heart of the innocent Dakotha. A profound silence reigns for an instant among the ferocious band. No sound breaks the awful stillness save the sobs and piteous moans of the victim, who hangs trembling in the air, while the chief of the sacrifice makes a last offering of her to the Master of the universe. At that moment he transfixes her through the heart—upon the instant a thousand murderous arrows quiver in the body of the poor child. Her whole body is one shapeless mass, riddled with arrows as numerous as are the quills upon the back of the porcupine.

While the howling and the dancing continue, the great chief of the nation, mounting the three posts in triumph, plucks the arrows from the dead body and casts them into the fire. The iron-barbed arrow being the only one preserved for future sacrifices. He then squeezes the blood from the mangled flesh, upon the maize and other seeds, which stand around in baskets ready to be planted; and then, as the last act of this cruel and bloody sacrifice, he plucks the still palpitating heart from the body, and, heaping the fiercest imprecations upon the enemies of his race, devours it amidst the shouts and screams of his people. The rite is finished. The haughty and satisfied savages move away from the scene of their awful tragedy; they pass the remainder of the day in feasts and merriment. The murdered and deformed body hangs where it was immolated, a prey to wolves and carnivorous birds. I will end this painful tragedy, by giving you an extract of a former letter.

"Such horrid cruelties could not but bring down the wrath of Heaven upon their nation. As soon as the report of the sacrifice reached the Sioux, they burned with the desire to avenge their honor, and bound themselves by oaths that they would not rest until they had killed as many Pawnees as their innocent victim had bones or joints in her body. More than a hundred Pawnees have at length fallen under their tomahawks, and their oaths have since been still more amply fulfilled in the massacre of their wives and children.

"In view of so much cruelty, who could mistake the agency of the arch enemy of mankind, and who would refuse to exert himself to bring these benighted nations to the knowledge of the One only true Mediator between God and man, and of the only true sacrifice without which it is impossible to appease the Divine justice!"

With sentiments of respect and esteem,

I remain, my dear sir, yours, &c.

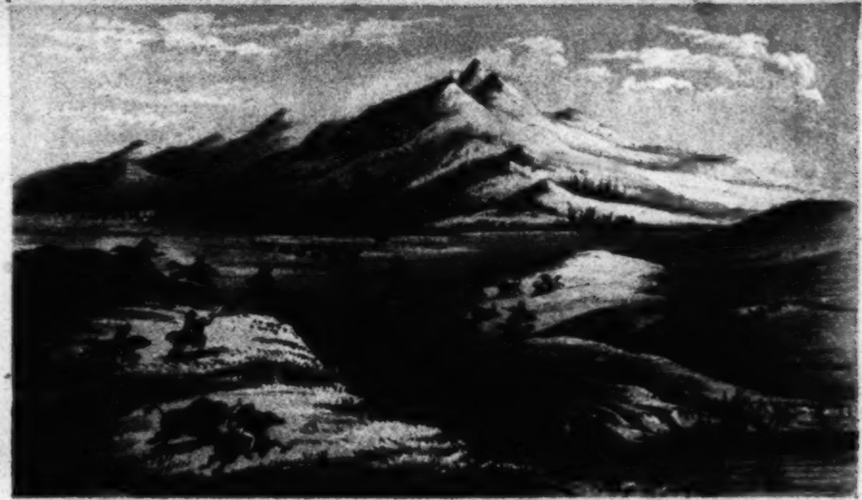
PETER J. DE SMET, S. J.

No. XXVII.

A. M. D. G.

EXTRACT FROM THE MISSIONARY'S JOURNAL.

To-day, 17th August, we pitched our tents upon the borders of a winding stream, in the heart of a wild, mountainous country, whose deep ravines and gloomy caverns are well suited for the dens of wild animals. Great as our expectations were of finding here abundance of game, they were not deceived. In less than an hour our hunters killed as many as twelve bears. During the night, an event of a far more serious nature occurred. The sudden firing of a gun roused us from slumber. Every warrior was on the alert; that shot could have proceeded from no hand save that of a "Black-Foot!" We looked at one another in silent anticipation. Who, then, had been the sufferer? The painful question was quickly answered. It was the



GREAT BUFFALO HUNT. _ *VIEW OF THE MUSCLE-SHELL MOUNTAINS.* (See Letter 24. Nº 6 poor widow Camilla, one of the Flathead tribe. The ball had passed through her throat and she expired without a groan! Happily, her soul was ripe for Heaven. From the period of her first communion, she had never passed a Sunday without approaching the holy table, nor was her baptismal robe sullied by the slightest stain. The funeral obsequies were performed on the banks of Yellow-Stone River, because that spot was better suited than any other to conceal her sepulchre from the avaricious Black-Feet assassin. All things work together for good to those that love God; this death, terrible, indeed, in the sight of men, but precious in the eyes of the Lord, became the source of a good work. The murdered woman left two daughters, both very young; had her life been spared, she would not, perhaps, have been able to shield their innocence from the dangers to which it would have been exposed; but, now, they were immediately adopted by Ambrose, chief of the Flat-Heads, and father of a numerous family; in his noble heart, charity, piety, and confidence in God go hand-in-hand with his courage.

At the distance of a few parasangs from Yellow-Stone, the buffaloes made their appearance

One of them plunged into the river to avoid the death which threatened him, swam rapidly down the current, then suddenly tacked about to escape his pursuers; and, finally, exhausted by his efforts, and unable longer to contend with his fate, came out of the river, and stretched himself upon the turf at the entrance of our camp, where his presence caused no other mischief than that of exciting the mirth of the women and children.

Farther on, two bears were seen making their way through the bushes. The young people, who were the first to perceive them, announced their discovery by loud yells. Immediately, a Black-Foot, a friend of the Flat-Heads, sprang forward with the intention of giving the first blow to the common enemy; but the sagacious animal, anticipating his design, rushed from his lair, and fastened his enormous claws on the uplifted arm of the young Indian, whose situation would have been desperate, had not a Flat-Head come to his assistance. A few days after, another converted Black-Foot, finding himself in the same circumstances, and wishing to show that he knew better than his comrade how to kill bears, went about it in the same manner, and shared the same fate; a punishment which his temerity richly deserved.

Whilst we were encamped in this place, several chiefs of the Corbeaux tribe came to visit the Flat-Heads, accompanied by the flower of their young warriors. They spoke with enthusiasm of the visit their nation had received from a Black-gown in 1842, and expressed great desire for the time to come when they, like the Flat-Heads, would enjoy the privilege of having Black-gowns always with them, to instruct them in heavenly things. They still observe the superstitious practices of the calumet. To render the odor of the pacific incense agreeable to their gods, it is necessary that the tobacco and the herb (skwiltz), the usual ingredients, should be mixed with a small quantity of buffalo's dung, and that the *great* pipe, after having gone round the lodge, should recommence the circuit as soon as it arrives at the opening, without which ceremony they imagine it would be useless to smoke with their brethren, or incense, as they do, the heavens, earth, four cardinal points, and medals of Washington and Jackson.

Nothing but misfortunes could await them.

Whilst they remained with us, we buried a Pend-d'Oreille Indian, who had died shortly after baptism, strengthened by all the sacraments of the church. This ceremony, which was performed with more than ordinary pomp in honor of the visitors, was concluded by the solemn erection of the cross on the grave of the deceased. May the remembrance of these last duties paid to a departed child of the church, increase in the hearts of the Corbeaux the desire of knowing Him, without the knowledge of whom there is no salvation. The following day they returned to their own camp.

The Pierced-Noses were now on their way to their own country; the Flat-Heads, on the contrary, were still in pursuit of game; for, although the season was far advanced, they had not yet commenced to lay in their winter provisions. Early the following morning, we struck our tents and resumed our march. We had not proceeded far, when our attention was attracted by a herd of buffaloes quietly feeding in the beautiful valley at our feet. They were so numerous, that each of the hunters killed several. The slaughter of these animals was but the prelude of that which was to take place on the following days. Our hunters brought in game in abundance. On one occasion, they returned laden with the spoils of 344 fat cows. We encamped in the very heart of the Black-Foot territory, yet the howling of wolves and bears, calling one another to their nocturnal repast, was the only sound that disturbed our repose. The hunting season is a time of rest for the missionary, of intimate union with his God, of renovation for his soul! It was in this spirit I received, with humble gratitude, the short but severe illness with which I was visited at this period. I regarded it, likewise, as sent me in punishment for the too natural pleasure I felt in contemplating the strange and varied scenes by which I was surrounded. During our encampment in this spot, I had the consolation of baptizing ten adults.

An unexpected fall of snow warned us that it was time to think of our return. The chief accordingly gave orders for all to be in readiness to set out the following day. The weather was clear, but intensely cold; and, suffering as I still was, from the effects of my recent illness, I had great difficulty in supporting its severity. We were, however, soon cheered by milder days, and warmer sunshine. Our young hunters were, once more, all animation. The pleasures of the chase were resumed as far as the good order necessary for the homeward march would permit. Even the children caught the general spirit, and bounded off in pursuit of some smaller animal, which the elated winner of the race never failed to bring back on his shoulder.

We were now entering the defile where we had before met with such brilliant success. At almost every step we fell in with some straggler. At one time, an old decrepit buffalo; at another, a fat cow, and sometimes a playful calf, whose dam had already fallen a victim. These animals were an easy prey, and their capture was a new source of sport for the boys.

On the 28th I retired to the summit of a neighboring mountain, to read the vespers of St. Michael. The atmosphere was unusually serene; not a sound disturbed the silence of nature. I gazed on the quiet beauty of the scene, hushed, as it were, in the presence of God, and my heart dilated at the thought of the thousands of unconverted Indians, buried in the darkness of idolatry. Full of these thoughts, I raised my eyes, and, excited as my imagination was, it seemed to me that I beheld the archangel, Michael, standing on the opposite mountain, exclaiming, "Deluded nations! Who is like unto God!" The voice resounded through the forests—it was echoed by the deep ravines. I fancied it was heard and understood by the wild children of the woods; their responding shouts rung in my ear. Yielding to the enthusiasm of my feelings, I hastily quitted my elevated position, and erected a wooden cross on the summit of a neighboring eminence. Some days after, a hunter discovered, near the half-consumed embers of an extinguished fire, a similar cross, to which a banner was attached. My first thought was, that it had been planted there by some Catholic, who had lost his way in the forest, and been devoured by the wolves. The Flat-Heads, however, well acquainted with the practices of their ancient foes, the Black-Feet, informed me that it was a custom among them to erect these crosses to the moon, in order to render her favorable to the robbery or chase, in which they were about to engage. This information dispelled the pleasing fancies in which I had indulged; and painfully reminded me that the God-Saviour is yet far from being adored in these wild abodes. May we not hope that the time will yet come, when the banner of the true cross will wave triumphant o'er this benighted land!

The obstacles which have hitherto prevented the missionaries from penetrating into the Black-Feet territory are now beginning to disappear, and there is every prospect of our soon being able to commence the glorious work of their conversion.

The next day we entered a mountain pass, where the foot of man had seldom trodden, as was proved by the fact, that fifteen beavers were taken in one night by three hunters. After following for some time the circuitous windings of the ravine, we came to an ascent so slippery, that at every instant I was in anticipation of some sad catastrophe. Presently a sumpter-horse missed his footing and fell, rolling down the precipice. Who, that had seen him fall from rock to rock, would ever have thought, that in a few minutes he would be journeying on, laden as before! Without uttering a single word, the guide made her way through the deep snow to the spot where the poor animal lay, unloaded him, raised him from the ground, replaced his burden, and brought him back to the rear of the troop.

We continued our route until sunset, along the mountain's summit; at length, after a forced march of ten hours, we pitched our tents on a beautiful island, where we enjoyed both security and repose. Surrounded by the waters of the Missouri, and abounding in rich pastures, this charming spot seems, as it were, destined by nature as a place of rest for the wearied traveller.

It would have been impossible to contemplate without admiring the loveliness of the landscape. From the southern coast of the river arose a ridge of mountains, whose varied colors of blue, red, green, and yellow, gave them a striking appearance; the effect of which was heightened by a small stream, leaping from rock to rock, in the form of a cascade, cooling the parched ground, insinuating itself into the crevices of the rocks, and giving birth to an infinite variety of creeping plants, and flowering shrubs.—The island itself is beautiful beyond description. The scenery is diversified by groups of the majestic button-ball, which, in this country, is the giant of the vegetable kingdom. It was under the shade of one of these noble trees that our hunters prepared to celebrate the feast of the Maternity. The sun's last rays had long disappeared beneath the horizon, ere all was ready for the evening prayer. After which, notwithstanding the fatigues of the day, a large fire was kindled before my tent, and the greater part of the night consecrated by these fervent children of the woods, to the reconciliation of their souls with God. The following day the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated with as much solemnity as the circumstances would permit. Of the ninety persons who then approached the table of the Lord, there was not one, who, since the departure from St. Mary's, had not communicated every month. Several had enjoyed that happiness each week. During the evening office nothing particular occurred. The eve of my departure the mothers brought their young children to receive my blessing; and the chiefs erected a cross in token of their gratitude for the favors received during the hunting season. To this latter circumstance the island is indebted for the beautiful name of St. Croix.

The following day I bade farewell to my dear neophytes; and, after joining in prayer with them for the last time, I set out on my return to St. Mary's.

N. POINT, S. J.

No. XXVIII.

"HENCEFORWARD THE PRAYER OF THE FLAT-HEADS SHALL BE OURS."

BY REV. P. N. POINT.

We shall see what gave occasion to these remarkable words uttered by thirty-seven Black-Feet, who had fallen into the hands of the Flat-Heads.

It is rare, at present, to find any Black-Feet, even among the most vicious tribes, who are not convinced that the *Black-gowns* desire their happiness.

The following observations clearly prove my proposition: 1, the kind reception they gave the Black Robe, who was taken by sixty of their warriors: 2, the attention with which they listened to the Rev. Mr. Thibault, a Canadian priest, who fell in with a large company of them at Fort Augusta, on the River Sascatshawin: 3, sending back to St. Mary's, a horse belonging to a Flat-Head missionary; a circumstance hitherto unheard of, in the relations of the Black-Feet with the Flat-Heads; 4, the confidence which several have manifested in the missionaries, on many remarkable occasions; 5, the smoking of the calumet in the plain of the Great Valley, with a small number of Flat-Heads whom they might have killed without difficulty; 6, the amicable visits they have paid the Flat-Heads by the persuasion of the hoary chief Nicholas, (baptized,) and the habitual residence of several of the tribe at the village of St. Mary's; 7, the plunder of horses is incomparably more rare than during the preceding years; 8, the four years' cessation of any serious attack; though, formerly, not a hunting party passed without a sanguinary battle with the Flat-Heads. In proof of this, remember the sixty-five battles of old Paulin. If we add to all this, the providential and admirable circumstance which occurred during the chase, and which we purpose relating, surely, it may be permitted to form the brightest prospects relative to the religious conquest of this numerous tribe; and I sincerely hope that an occurrence, which lately took place at St. Mary's, will contribute much to realize my desires.

The 2d or 3d February, during the night, the dogs barked—a pistol-shot was heard—a mournful silence ensues! A thief, doubtless, had been wounded. The following morning, marks of blood could be traced as far as the river, which led to the conclusion that the robber had perished in the waves; but, three days since, George Sapime, whilst duck-shooting, found the suffering being among some bushes, so exhausted by loss of blood that he could scarcely stand. George might easily have despatched him on the spot, according to the savage custom; but he thought it better to return to the village and take counsel as to what seemed most expedient to be done with the hapless desperado. At this intelligence, numbers of Indians mount their horses and gallop off, full armed, to the spot indicated. Whilst this was being transacted, the incident was related to Father Mengarini. Pelchimo and Ambrose, two really brave Flat-Heads, who communicated the intelligence, thought it base to kill a dying man. The zealous missionary conceived an ardent desire to secure the salvation of the culprit, by pouring on his soul the saving waters of regeneration. Pelchimo, seconding the good design, flies to the place, and arrives at the very instant when the pistols were cocked to terminate the prisoner's existence. "Stop!" vociferates the feeling Pelchimo. At this word the execution is suspended, and an hour after, the Black-Foot enemy and robber is tended, in the chieftain's lodge, with all the kindness that could be lavished on a noble and much-loved sufferer.

Father Mengarini, after having dressed his wounds, spoke to him of God, and his judgments: the sick man answered, that it was the first time he had heard these great truths. Such a reply, made the father cherish the hope of saving his soul; and, also, of contributing, by means of this man, to the designs of mercy, which, it seemed, the Almighty God had towards this terrible nation. "Brethren," said he, addressing the assembled chiefs, "during four years the Black-gowns have been among you, and each day have they spoken to you of God. You know well that His divine Son not only died on the cross for all men, but even pardoned his enemies, and prayed for his executioners, to teach us how we should act in the like occasions. An enemy has fallen into your hands—remember, he has a soul like yours, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and destined to sing eternally the divine mercy of your Saviour!

What shall be done with this man? Is he to live, or must he die?" "Let him live," answered every tongue. Overjoyed to find their hearts so replete with compassion, the Black-gown was expressing his satisfaction to the assembled tribe, when he was told that some obscure savages, of a different tribe, were not of the same opinion as the generous chieftains who surrounded him. This information induced the father to take a different tone; and addressing the murmurers, he thus spoke: "Brethren! when we pardon a foe, we imitate the ordinary conduct of God towards men. Who, among you, has not sinned during his life? And how often has God forgiven you? If, instead of forgetting your multiplied offences, the Almighty had placed your souls in the power of your infernal enemy, what would now be your fate? But no; God has not treated you thus; he has sent his ministers among you,—numbered you among his children, and promised heaven to your fidelity and compassion for the unfortunate; and who knows, if this signal favor may not depend on the generosity you exercise towards your enemy? The blood of Jesus Christ pleads for mercy in his behalf. Already have your chiefs pronounced his pardon. Will you imitate their noble conduct! Ah! if you refuse, take your knives and bury them in your enemy's heart! But, from that instant, call not God your Father; cease saying to Him: 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;' for, our Common Father might hear your prayer, but, it would be for your eternal reprobation." This brief but energetic appeal caused such sensation throughout the auditory, that every one approved the first decision. From that moment the entire village of St. Mary's, with the exception of a few malicious hearts, shared in the generous sentiments of the Flat-Head chiefs. Selpisto, a chieftain of the Pends-d'Oreilles, happened to be, at this time, at St. Mary's. He took the Black-Foot under his protection, and when he recovered from his wounds, loaned him a horse to return to his country; and he even redoubled his attention at the moment when he received the news that one of his sons had fallen a sacrifice to the Black-Feet. When the youth was met by his enemies, he was returning in triumph to St. Mary's, with the horses recently stolen from the village. His bravery had forced the robbers to return them; this circumstance rendered his loss a still greater affliction to his family. The return of the Black-Foot, so honorably dismissed, and the relation he gave the tribe of the mercy exercised towards him, caused his nation to look upon the Flat-Heads in a different light. "I am very glad," wrote Father Mengarini, "that this affair terminated amicably. I trust that the future will prove, that the Almighty, after having exercised mercy towards this unfortunate sinner, has also particular graces in reserve for this perfidious and benighted nation, which I hope, is destined to receive the light of the gospel. Should any fathers be named to this mission, I should be too happy to be of their number."

To whom are the Black-Feet indebted for a change so consoling, both to religion and humanity? Next to Almighty God, we may safely say, they owe it to the admirable conduct of the Flat-Heads, especially since the residence of the missionaries among the tribe. Some remarkable instances of virtue were exhibited during the hunting season.

On quitting St. Mary's our pious neophytes added some short invocations to their morning and evening prayers; 1, to the Heart of Jesus, as protector of the men's confraternity; 2, to the blessed Virgin, patroness of the women's sodality; 3, to St. Michael, model of the brave;

4, to St. Raphael, the guide of travellers; 5, to St. Hubert, the patron of hunters; 6, to St. Francis Xavier, for the conversion of idolaters. We shall see, that these pious aspirations were not addressed to Heaven in vain.

The eve preceding the anniversary of St. Francis Xavier's canonization, the missionary administered baptism to a Black-Foot, whose example induced many others to solicit the like favor. The reception of the holy sacraments of penance and eucharist, was very frequent. There were 430 confessions, (children included). 350 communions, 103 of which took place the last Sunday. Only one person was left, in the camp; he having recently made his first communion, did not renew it during the chase; whereas, his companions approached two or three times, and some, even more frequently. The pious practice of saying the Angelus, reciting the Rosary, and singing canticles, was maintained throughout the camp. The chiefs displayed their zeal for every species of good; an unalterable patience was the distinguishing virtue of all, and this is saying much, if we consider the trials attending the hunting season. Their resignation to the Divine will, was strongly manifested. During twenty-four days they had been toiling onwards, undergoing much suffering from a rigorous abstinence, when the news was spread that a herd of buffaloes had been seen in the environs. The Indians repaired thither, but it was to encounter a keen disappointment. Thus, the poor Flat-Heads found themselves constrained either to fast or seek food in the country of the Black-Feet. As their horses were in a better condition than those of the other tribes, they resolved to risk the dangerous expedient. Four days they traversed heights and floods: the weather was cold and snow lay on the ground; no animals were to be seen. At last, on Wednesday in Ember-week, the missionary warned his little flock that the moment was propitious for addressing Heaven to implore the goods of earth; but, he added: "if you wish the Divine bounty to shed on you His gifts, you must promise not to abuse them." His words were attended to with deep emotion, and each savage, according to the Indian expression, "Arranged his heart and began to pray." The next morning, (Thursday), herds of cattle were seen in the neighborhood; and on Friday and Saturday so many were killed that their great number encumbered the lodges.

Already was the camp on its homeward

march, when, 12th March, the chief, reaching the top of a mountain which commanded an extensive view of the plain, suddenly stopped—and after gazing fixedly for some time, discovered moving objects at the verge of the horizon. At first, those around him imagined they saw buffaloes; next, they fancied they could discover a herd of deer; the final conclusion was, that an armed party of Black-Feet rapidly approached them. What was to be done? Victor, the chief, lost nothing of his usual presence of mind. He calmly quitted the head of the camp, mounted his horse, and making the animal perform a few evolutions, he was instantly surrounded by the bravest of his band. Isaac proposed prayer.—Victor exclaimed: "Let us wait until the Black-Feet show themselves yonder." Saying these words, he pointed out a second mountain which concealed us. Never had any position offered more advantages. The Black-Feet were climbing the opposite side—they were already fatigued. Between the mountain and the chain which crowned the horizon extended an immense plain, without either tree, ravine or river that could offer them the least rampart. They were but thirty-seven in number, newly exercised in arms, and on foot. The Flat-Heads, on the contrary, were on horseback, numbered fifty, in the flower of age, all well armed and conducted by chieftains whose shadow would put to flight more enemies than were now approaching. Besides, Victor was at their head; he who had never been conquered, and what is more, not even wounded, though six different times he had been encompassed by the Black-Feet. The marked protection of Heaven had thus manifested itself in his favor!

The enemy, then, could not escape them. All eyes were strained towards the spot indicated by the chief, expecting the approach of the foe. Victor judges that there is "periculum in mora;" he casts a smiling look on the missionary, raises his fire-arms, utters a yell, urges on his steed, and flies to the combat, followed by the bravest of the land. Perceiving their approach, the Black-Feet took to flight, casting away all that embarrassed them; but beholding themselves hemmed in on all sides, they endeavoured to rally; the Flat-Heads hasten towards them; Victor's horse having been lately wounded, Fidele, Ambrose, Isaac, Ferdinand, and Emanuel, passed their chief, and arrived first in front of the enemy. Fidele spoke not; but his warrior name, signifying *Thunderbolt*, sufficiently declared his courage. Ambrose announced him by that title, which causes the Black-Feet to turn pale, and added, in a terrible voice: "Fire not! If you fire you are dead men!" God spoke by his lips. Instead of firing, one of the Black-Feet threw down his gun, whilst several others extended their arms, in a supplicating attitude. The brave Ambrose refused not the pardon his enemies solicited; for true courage will never bathe itself in the blood of a conquered foe, who appeals for mercy, and whose conversion has been begged of Heaven. The generous warrior willingly extends his hand to the foe; and *all*, imitating his example, show that clemency has conquered. At this happy moment, when such Christian sentiments pervaded every heart, the *Black-gown* advanced, and the conquered foes offered him their hands, and, spreading a buffalo-skin on the snow, invited him to seat himself, and receive the honors of the calumet. Whilst the smoke of peace ascended towards heaven, presents were offered, and received, on both sides. The oldest of the Black-Feet band, seated on the left of the missionary, presented him a pair of Indian moccasins, and, strange to say, they were embroidered, with a blue cross standing out conspicuous-ly from the surrounding work. The poor idolater! did he, at that moment, think of the "quam speciosi pedes?" Most probably not; but, it is certain, he remarked the pleasure caused by his present, and felt an assurance, from the manner in which it was received, that, henceforward, all hearts would be united.

The Flat-Head camp set out on their return. The thirty-seven Black-Feet followed them. The thawing of the snow rendered the roads exceedingly bad, and the kind-hearted Flat-Heads, compassionating the fate of their new friends, did all they could to help them on their journey. Before separating, Victor conducted the principal Black-Feet into the missionary's lodge, that he might witness their parting good friends; and, during half an hour, every thing was said that could strengthen the new-formed friendship between the tribes. The Black-Feet told us, that for some time past they had been expecting a Black-gown, and that, when he should come among them, he would be well received; that, henceforth, they and the Flat-Heads would live like brothers; "that the prayer of the Flat-Heads should be theirs." And, although the sun had set, they assisted at prayers; after which, they exchanged some tokens of friendship, and left, declaring that they were going to persuade their village to act as they had done.

The 19th March, feast of St. Joseph, seven days after the pardon so generously granted the Black-Feet, Heaven bestowed on us the fruit of our forbearance in the amicable visit of the grand chief of the "Petite Robe, Itchetiles Melakas—or the three crows." All the chiefs smoked with him under the missionary's tent. Ambrose explained to him the Catholic Tree; Victor invited him to pass the night in his lodge. Such attention completely gained his heart; and the next morning the Black-Foot communicated to the missionary the resolution he had formed of soliciting the admission of his twenty-eight lodges among the Flat-Head tribe; and that he would repair to the village of St. Mary's for that purpose, towards the decline of the present moon.

During the night of the 19th some Black-Feet, belonging to a distant tribe, stole into the camp of the Flat-Heads and carried off five horses; but one of the robbers fell, pierced with balls, and two strokes of the knife. It would be difficult to describe the horrors of that night! the savage yells, mingled with the sound of thunder, and report of musketry. The miserable desperado, by the lightning's glare, could be perceived on the ground, streaming torrents of blood from his wounds, and his unhappy soul about to quit the agonizing body, to find in eternity the chastisement due to its crimes. What else could the minister of God do, in such a circumstance, but pray the Father of Mercy to perform a miracle of grace in favor of the criminal.

The Flat-Heads have abolished the barbarous custom of reeking their vengeance on the mutilated body of their enemy. They even carry their generosity so far, as to give sepulture to all who die among them. The robber owed his grave to the bravest of the Flat-Heads, the chief of a numerous family, and the adopted father of two children, whom the Black-Feet have rendered orphans.

The following day offered nothing remarkable, if I except the many proofs of solid virtue displayed by the camp. To afford them pleasure, the missionary amused himself in his leisure hours tracing with a pen several historical facts, drawn from their annals, and suited to their tastes; such as, march of the camp, divers occupations, labors of the chase, feats of arms, singular tragic scenes, religious ceremonies, &c., &c. It would be difficult to relate the pleasure this little collection gave them; and, what is still better, it contributed powerfully to raise the authority of the chieftains in the estimation of the young men, and to excite in them a noble emulation in the practice of good; for experience has clearly proved, both in civilized and uncivilized society, that this quality is not only a stimulus to noble actions, but a greater preventive of evil, than all chastisements united.

Human ingenuity is useful, but it can do little towards the salvation of souls, if it be not joined to fervent prayer. Every missionary should be convinced of this truth. Our pious neophytes have experienced the efficacy of frequent recourse to Heaven. Each day they had invoked the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Holy Heart of Mary; and the first Friday and Saturday of March proved the most successful hunting days. We had invoked the patron of hunters, and our chase was relatively fortunate. We had implored the protection of the glorious St. Michael, and never did our chiefs display greater valor in the presence of the enemy. We had entreated the Apostle of the Indies to obtain the conversion of the Indians, and one party of Black-Feet falls under our power, whilst the other amicably visits us, and departs, exclaiming, "The prayer of the Flat-Heads shall be ours." In fine, we had taken St. Raphael as our guide; our journey was long, fatiguing, and perilous, nevertheless, no serious accident occurred, though we often fell on the ice and rocks. Not a hunter in our camp was there who did not remark this manifest protection; and nearly all testified their gratitude to God by a fervent communion.

On Passion Sunday one hundred and three approached the holy table. The evening of so happy a day was crowned by the erection of a cross, to which they gave the name of Eugene, because the previous evening a quiver of that excellent Flat-Head, and a letter written on a piece of skin, after the Indian fashion, apprised us that he had been massacred in the neighborhood by a party of Banax. We then remembered, with consolation, that, on Ash Wednesday, a few days before his death, he came to see us, and during his stay received the holy communion. Thus, all seemed to concur, even this death, in causing us to bless the Divine Bounty which ever watches with paternal care, to supply the necessities of his confiding children.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM.